WEST AFRICA

December 1993 - 9 January 1994

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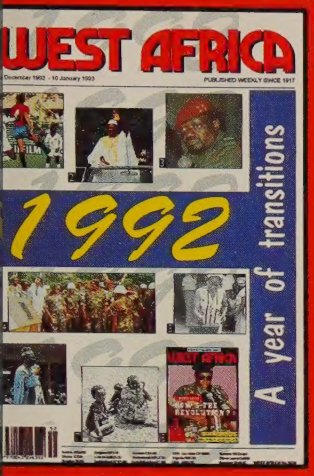

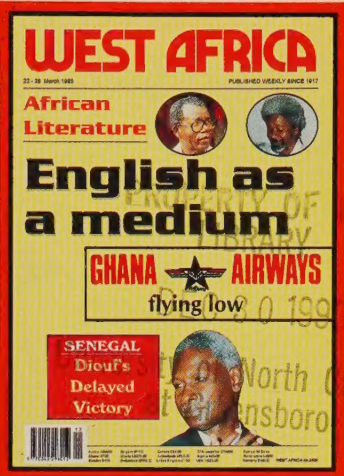

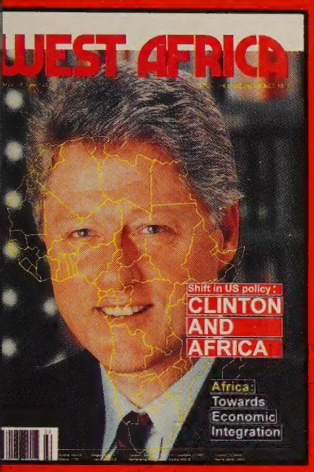

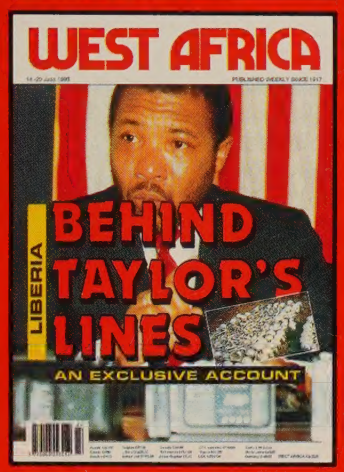

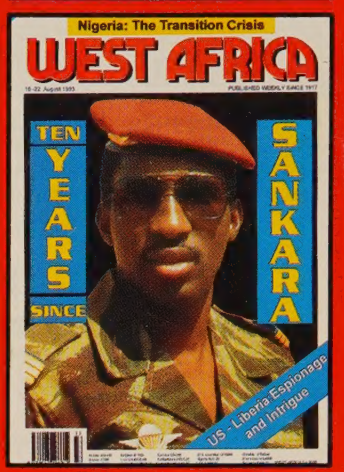

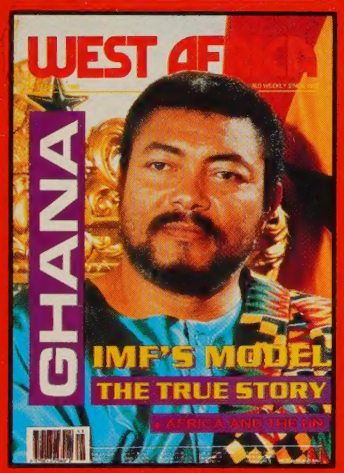

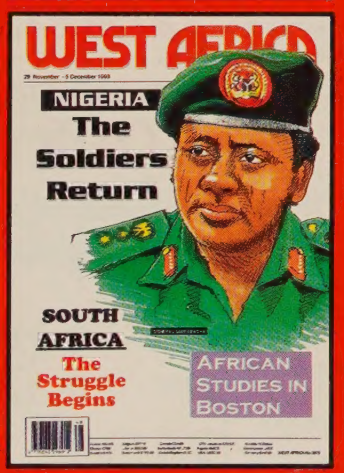

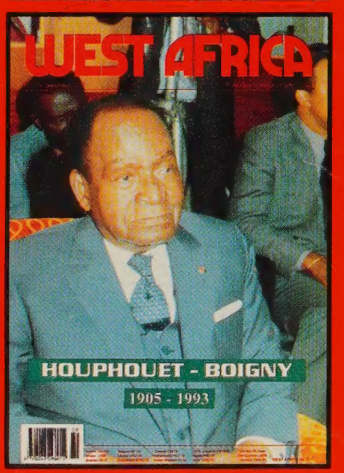

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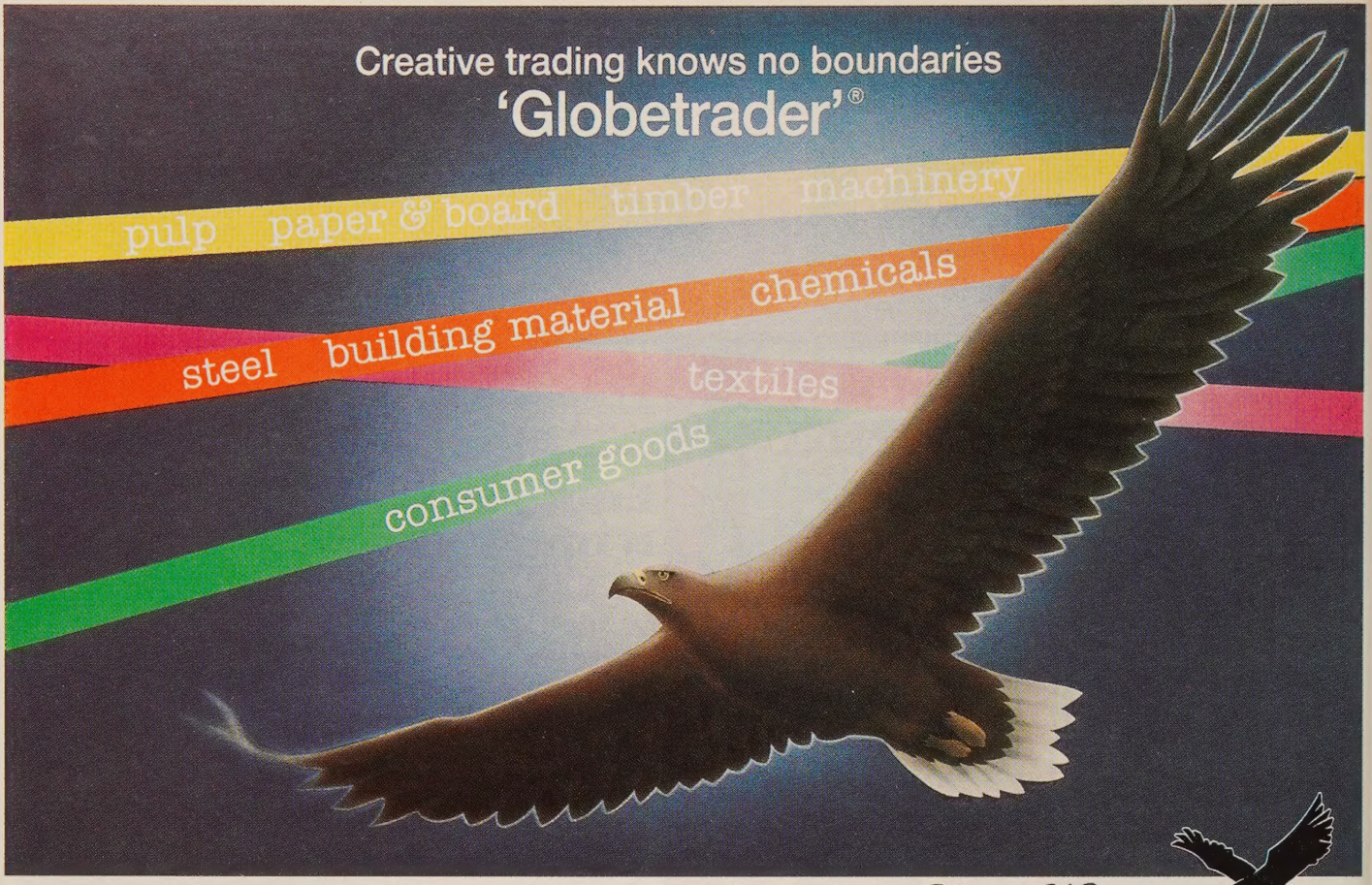

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LETTERS

'Call national conference'

BABANGIDA AND HIS MEN probably thought that Bashir Tofa was going to win the June 12 presidential election. It is said they would have handed power to him. So it was no surprise that Tofa and his party refused to accept defeat.

The SDP itself was also divided on the issue. And the attitude of the NRC concerning the election results goes a long way towards showing that our politicians have not yet understood that one can sometimes lose an election. For them, one simply has to win or else... Tofa said when contesting the presidency that he was prepared to be either a loser or a winner. But when it dawned on him that he was really losing, he began to cry foul.

The call by the senators for Nigerians not to support the military government is like flogging a dead horse. What did they do after the nullification of the June 12 election? It is clear that our politicians have failed us once again. If the winners and losers of the June 12 election (reportedly free and fair) had accepted the result wholeheartedly, we would not be talking of a military government now.

The only way out for Nigeria now, it seems, is a sovereign national conference, not just a constitutional conference. It is one thing a majority of Nigerians want and it will surely be a resounding success. I have been in Zaire for quite some time now and witnessed their own national conference. It was Mobutu who convened it but when he found it was not going his way he backed out.

One thing is for sure, and it is that as soon as Zaire is able to get rid of the obstacles and begin to put into practice all the decisions taken at their national conference, it will become a model state in Africa.

As for Nigeria, it is not likely to have many obstacles at a national conference. This is because Abacha, unlike Mobutu, has made it clear that he has not come to stay long. It will be the first time an 'anglophone' country will be having a national conference in Africa. If it worked for some 'francophones', it surely will work for 'anglophones'.

If a national conference is what Abacha has come to make possible for Nigerians, then he will certainly go down in history as a hero. A year is enough for him to do it. But he can be tolerated for two years. However, if he has come to impose political parties and their manifestos on the people just to keep them talking while he plans how to prolong his reign, then that won't be good enough.

The new leader (Abacha) has surely scored some very good points. Nonetheless Nigerians should still wait and see.

UCHENNA OSIGWE *Kinshasa, Zaire*

BABANGIDA ALONE SHOULD not be blamed for the political chaos in Nigeria today. Blame should also be apportioned to those politicians and leaders who gave him their support. Jesus Christ said to his disciples: "The son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the son of man is betrayed."

Maybe Babangida was destined to make the political blunder that he made by annulling the June 12 election, but it was such a shame that some politicians and Nigerians supported him, threatening secession and promoting tribal politics and injustice. These Nigerians should know that by supporting the annulment of the election they have sent us a decade backwards.

We should allow this present military regime to stay as long as it wishes. The problem is with our politicians and not in the system. The military should learn from their Pakistani counterparts how to settle political deadlocks and promote democracy, if they are really interested in democracy as they want us to believe.

DOMINIC UCHE *Riederich, Germany*

Ghana and tourism

IT IS GRATIFYING to know that at last Ghanaians have realised the need to do something about our immigration regulations with a view to attracting more tourists to our beautiful country. It must be said, however, that in spite of all the praise the Minister of Tourism deserves for instituting the measures enumerated in *West Africa* of November 29, there is still a lot to be done.

One of our best tourist attractions which has stood the test of time is our people. Every foreign visitor in Ghana I know of testifies to this. But the first impression most of them get at the airport presents them with a very different picture, and this is rather unfortunate.

KWAME TWUMASI-FOFIE *Berne, Switzerland*

Alleged libel

I HAVE BEEN following with interest the issue between Sierra Leone's military ruler, Valentine Strasser, and the *Newbreed* newspaper.

Other than what has been carried in the letters pages of your magazine, I have a broad picture of the issue, though the details are not available to me at first hand. As a media practitioner, I can identify a number of pertinent factors which the parties, and those who have written letters to your magazine, seem to have overlooked.

Strasser appears to have been badly advised by his lawyer(s) and the person in charge of the information and broadcasting department has failed to foresee the negative and embarrassing consequences of the action. I am of the opinion that the repetition of the "alleged libel" by *Newbreed* is a matter for the courts.

The question is: why has *Newbreed* and a London-based paper been picked upon, and why has no similar action been instituted against the Swedish journal which allegedly first printed the "libel"?

We can understand the lawyer's position in the matter: his duty is to seek his client's interest and preserve his good name. The position of the Minister or Secretary for Information and Broadcasting is what worries me. What advice if any did he give? Is he aware of the relationship that should exist between the media, governments, politicians and society in general?

I hold no brief for *Newbreed* or its 'journalists'. It is a fact that Sierra Leone has never been endowed with any creditable appointee to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. And sadly, some of our 'journalists' can hardly make the distinction between being a reporter or a journalist. Invariably they are poorly educated, barely literate, have never had any form of journalistic training and base their professional claims on an ability to string together a few sentences.

Until those who claim to be journalists in Sierra Leone can understand and be aware of the fundamental codes and conventions in the practice of journalism, and can acquire the discipline that the profession imposes on its practitioners, they have no-one but themselves to blame when sanctions are imposed on them for their excesses and carelessness.

ROLAND BUCK *Nottingham, UK*

Public sector fraud

I WAS SURPRISED to learn in *West Africa* of December 19 that Ghana's public sector is plagued by fraud. For example, the Audit Service discovered that billions of cedis had been embezzled in many of the schools, and also the Ministry of Works and Housing accounts between 1985 and 1989 had not been audited. And the government departments failed to stick to the provisions of the Financial Administration Decree of 1979 which demanded early submission of accounts for auditing.

When Rawlings became the head of state and chairman of the PNDC, some people were publicly executed for corruption and theft. The revelations published in *West Africa* show that the PNDC itself was overwhelmingly plagued by fraud and corruption. The Ministry of Works and

Housing, Ghana National Trading Corporation and other public bodies were plagued by fraud.

Such fraud and other wrongs probably motivated the inclusion of an indemnity clause in the present constitution to protect members of the PNDC and AFRC which existed in 1979.

I am sure that there will be more revelations in due course.

K. ASARE *London, UK*

Indigenous names

IT IS rather ironic that Mr Orlando Nii Ayikai Aryee should propose that parliament pass a motion giving indigenous names to the regions of Ghana because the current names are entirely alien and do not truly represent Ghanaians as truly African. Does "Orlando" make the MP feel like an alien in Ghana and any less an African? Maybe he should follow the advice of one of his friends in parliament who suggested that our names should be changed as well. In the process, Aryee should not belong to a party called the National Democratic Convention, and heaven forbid that he should refer to himself as 'Mr' in this 'culturally correct' era.

The same goes for Mr Kofi Attoh who represents NDC-Ho Central. At least his name, Kofi, should make him feel truly a Ghanaian. As for all those other MPs who support Orlando's idea, if your names rob you of your Ghanaian and African identities, please feel free to change them.

On a more serious note I would like to ask the 'Orlandos' in parliament if they realise the cost implications of this ridiculous idea of changing all the names of the regions at a time when the economy of the nation is in a shambles? And would the new indigenous names be Fanti, Twi, Ga, Ada, Krobo, Ewe or what? Please be serious and give Ghanaians a well-deserved break.

As for me, I am glad and proud that I was born a Ghanaian in the Eastern Region of Ghana and I am indeed happy to answer to my name.

GLORIA MINTAH *Ontario, Canada*

Discriminatory action

MAY I, through your pages, draw the attention of your anti-racist readers to an unpleasant development affecting workers at the London Borough of Hackney?

Although Hackney is a Labour council, and makes noises about Equal Opportunity policies against racism, sexism and so on, its managers have now taken disciplinary action (two written warnings) against two African workers - for speaking to each other in their own language!

We would be interested to know of any other cases like this, and especially of any successful fights against such policies. Meanwhile, we shall treat it as a totally unacceptable act of discrimination, and one which we hope will be widely condemned.

TONY WHELAN *London, UK*
Branch Publicity Officer,
UNISON No. 1 Branch

Constitutional ideas

AS A CONCERNED Sierra Leonean, I recommend that the draft constitution for our next civilian regime should include provisions for a drastic reduction of the parliamentary seats and size of the cabinet and giving parliament the sole authority to create a new ministry or cabinet seat in order to prevent their multiplication. I also recommend the creation of not more than two political parties in order to save time and cost.

Section 53-2 of the old constitution states that the president should be not less than 40 years while section 92-16 recommended 45 years for senators. I feel it should be the other way around. As for section 91-1d which recommended the appointment of four senators, two from each of our two religions (Islam and Christianity), this brings religion into our politics and it is an invitation to people to start voting on religious lines. This can be dangerous.

SAIDU H. BUNDU *Washington DC, US*

Danquah-Busia tradition

THE INTERACTION BETWEEN the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the ruling party in Ghana (the National Democratic Congress - NDC) should gladden the hearts of all peace-loving Ghanaians. It has shown once again the maturity of the Danquah/Busiah tradition.

What the opponents of the NPP's action should realise is that this is not the first time in the chequered political history of Ghana that the said tradition has called or opted for a dialogue. Professor Busiah of blessed memory, through his wisdom and foresight, called for a dialogue between the blacks in the then apartheid South Africa and their white counterparts. For this he was criticised by his opponents. Now, this is what we are witnessing in South Africa.

Gone are the days when Dr Busiah and Dr Nkrumah were not on talking terms. What matters to most Ghanaians of the present era is the enhancement of socio-economic and living conditions and not unnecessary confrontations.

ALEX OWUSU-BOAKYE *London, UK*

Asare's suggestion

MR K. ASARE suggests (*West Africa*, December 13) a new capital for Ghana with "its boroughs named after the past great sons and daughters". Why not existing public buildings, roads, major streets, university halls, colleges?

Asare's three reasons why Accra should cease to be the capital are both contradictory and untenable. Accra must remain Ghana's capital for these reasons: first, if it was chosen for defence purposes, then the Ghana Armed Forces must be capable of defending it in case of attack by a hostile neighbour; second, cities like Abidjan, Dakar, Nairobi, Dar-es-Salaam, to name but a few, are situated on the coast and still remain capitals of their respective African countries; third, it will not be possible to populate Asare's proposed capital with an equal number of citizens representing all the tribes of Ghana; fourth, Ghana simply hasn't got the resources to contemplate building a new capital city. Fifth, the fact that Nigeria has built Abuja doesn't mean Ghana must copy blindly.

There are many other issues in Ghana crying for attention, such as providing the basic needs of Ghanaians. It will be politically, economically, socially, culturally and above all, financially suicidal for a relatively poor country like Ghana to think of building the likes of Abuja or Brasilia just to satisfy the likes of Asare. A new capital city for Ghana is not at all a social, political or economic priority.

Ko' OPPONG *London, UK*

Glover's work

A BLADE GLOVER'S WORK is always better than photographs, and his best paintings convey an immediacy, a movement which so encapsulates the way a market might be that it seems a living thing.

I think Catherine Sackey's reference just might undervalue Glover's beautiful work.

N. TOWNSEND *Hertfordshire, UK*

Mayor Schumann

I WAS INTERESTED to read in your issue of December 12 the profile of Cllr Marion Schumann, described as 'Mayoress' of the London Borough of Lambeth. I wish to respectfully point out that this should have read the 'Mayor' of Lambeth.

The Mayor is elected by the members of the Council - the Mayoress (a woman) or an escort (a man) is chosen by the Mayor to assist in the performance of social duties. I would therefore be grateful if you would kindly rectify this in your next edition.

I have had personal experience of being referred to as the Mayoress, when I was Mayor of the London Borough of Newham (1979/1980) and I corrected it whenever it occurred. I regret that people are still under the impression that the office of Mayor can only be held by a man.

MARJORIE HELPS *London, UK*

The Editor reserves the right to shorten or edit letters. We regret that due to the number of letters we receive, we cannot acknowledge them all. Please include your full name and address.

WEST AFRICA
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A painful year

THE YEAR 1993 was a cruel one. It was not just the continuation of violent struggles in countries like Angola, Bosnia, Somalia, Haiti and parts of the former Soviet Union, where the internecine nature of the conflicts seemed to make them more bloody and atrocious: or the uncertainty and lack of direction of a world that, having only a few short years ago proclaimed itself on the brink of a new world order, seems to have lost confidence in itself, and is falling back atavistically on ethnicity and religion, which have very often proved to be poisoned wells of racism and fanaticism. What really causes distress at the moment are the painful gaps between aspirations and reality which constituted the main themes of 1993.

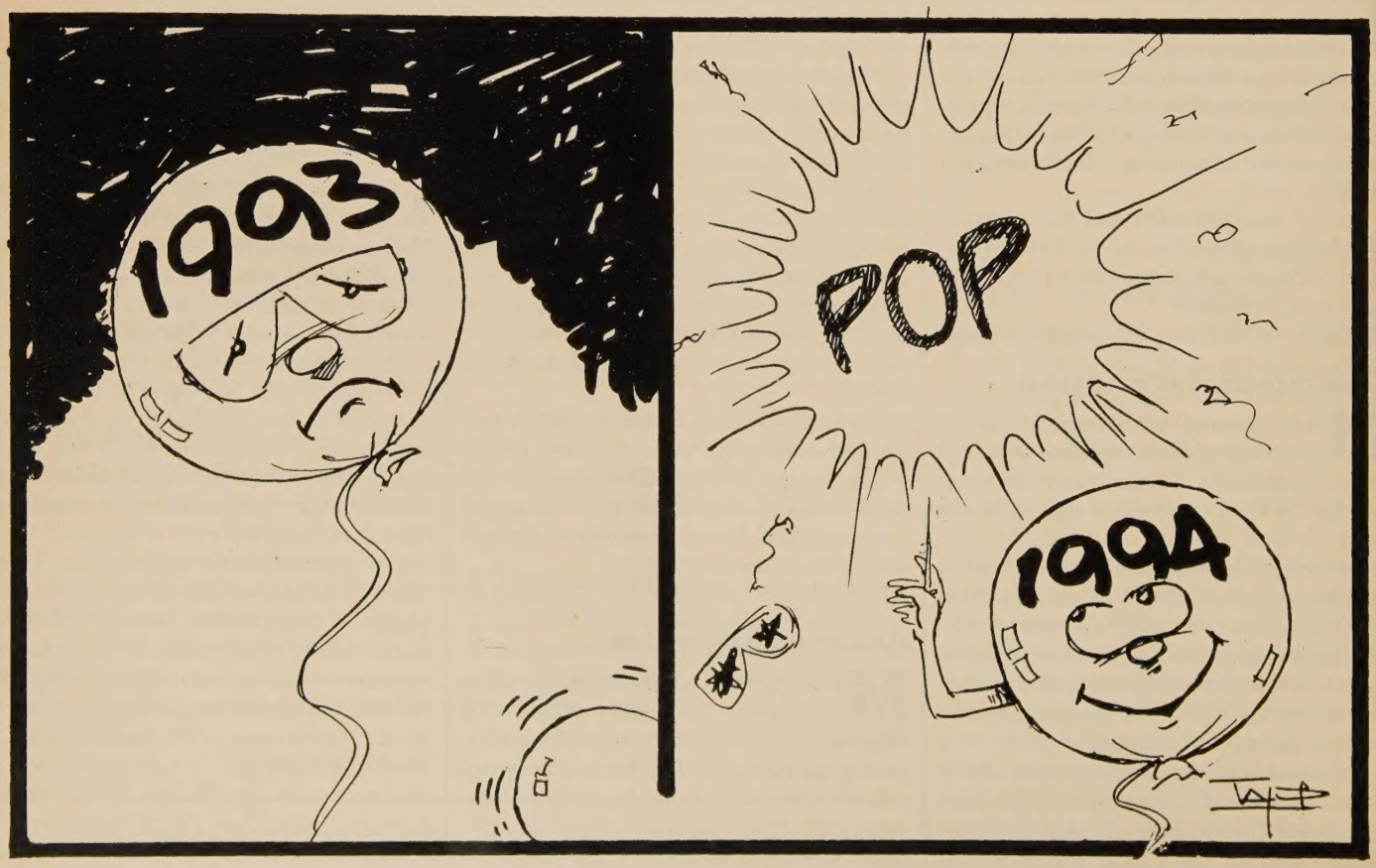
Rabin and Arafat in Norway and on the White House lawn, Major and Reynolds in Downing Street, seemed gropingly and against the odds to be pointing in the direction of bringing peace to two of the world's longest standing and bitterest conflicts: and yet the violence continued. Even in South Africa, which has been one of the world's most genuine causes for optimism in recent times, the country has sometimes appeared so steeped in bloodshed that the dreamed-of future looked almost unattainable. And it was only because "to return would be as tedious as going o'er" , that the year ended there on a relatively up-beat note, acknowledging that next year, the year of the first democratic election, would be the decisive one.

This gap was well illustrated in the way world aspirations managed to be contained in thick documents of great tedium - the finally approved Treaty of Maastricht setting up the European Union (EU), and the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT), the seven-years-in-the-making Uruguay Round. But the reality was, on the one hand a Europe fraying at the edges, and unable even to hold together its joint Exchange Mechanism, let alone sail towards Monetary Union, and on the other hand a world in the grip of a seemingly endless recession for which GATT is only the latest panacea, that may indeed help some, but from which "non-Tiger" developing countries may only expect some trickle-down, as we noted in last week's issue, on this page.

Indeed, some commentators, while still bedazzled by some of the benefits that are supposed to flow from GATT, have observed that its free-trading spirit was conceived at the height of the Reagan-Thatcher "big bang" of the '80s: and while the spirit of free enterprise may have helped to squash communism as we knew it, it seems less equipped to handle the problems it brings in its wake. Capitalism, like patriotism, is not enough.

It was also a year in which Africa did nothing to reverse the trend to marginalisation, to "slipping off the map of the world's concerns" detected in the '80s. The fiasco of US policy in Somalia (where too high a profile, and a naive approach, have now turned into scuttle) put in peril the constructive attempts of the UN to play a peace-making and peacekeeping role in other countries such as Angola, Mozambique and Liberia, where increasingly the UN was expected to shoulder the burden hitherto borne by the troops of Ecomog.

Economic and social statistics on Africa continued to be bleak. The latest World Bank debt tables showed that, while the debt problems of Latin America and East Asia seem to be over the hump, Africa's was continuing to deteriorate. A Unicef report on the state of the world's children released at the end of the year demonstrated that the condition of families in the world's poorest countries (many of which are in Africa) was continuing to spiral downwards. Although not specifically fingered by Unicef, there seems little doubt that in Africa, at least, the structural adjustment policies prescribed by the West are perceived as being responsible for the widespread increase



in hardship. Doubts are increasingly being expressed, notably by NGOs such as Oxfam, as to whether the right remedies are being applied: SAPs may indeed be sapping.

Even if the measures themselves were in theory beneficial (which is inevitably open to some argument), it was always a case in practice of "all other things being equal", which they rarely are. Although admission of past mistakes has not been a strong point among the so-called aid donors, the fact that words such as "governance" (a good catch-all that covers both inefficiency and corruption) are now almost routinely part of the vocabulary, suggests an awareness that structural adjustment, too, is not enough. In the meantime, in many countries, the official economy seemed to be shrinking compared with the unofficial one. Zaire, where there has been a complete governmental paralysis, is a classic case in point, but there is a risk of it happening in franc zone countries, too, unless the CFA franc is devalued soon, but if that comes (or rather when it comes) that measure is likely to produce its own set of turbulences.

The distribution of blame, while instructive, is seldom constructive. When one is addressing the problem of Africa's worsening condition, one finds a variety of converging causes, but the matter has passed from the economic to the political. Above all the thirst for a different kind of government (governance?) from that which had obtained in the post-independence years coincided with the international triumph of Western-style democracy, and produced the African democracy movements. For these,too, 1993 has been on the whole a disappointing year. It is true there have been successes to record - in Niger, in CAR, in Madagascar, where military candidates bent on recycling have been defeated at the polls and have been unable to stem the democratic tide. In Niger, in particular, the election result marked the end of an era, with, for the first time in its history, the Hausa majority producing a Hausa President.

These, however, have been more than offset by the year's setback. The most dramatic was the way the most spectacular democratic advance of the year - the overthrow of Tutsi hegemony by the ballot box in Burundi, was destroyed by the military coup of October in which the elected president Melchior Ndadaye was assassinated, and the country broken apart by an orgy of bloodshed.

The "dinosaurs", the dictators of Togo and Zaire managed to buck the trend enough to make their own retrogressiveness a counter-trend, and the instability in Congo-Brazzaville, generated in part by the continuing desire of the army to call the shots, brought new admonitions about the "disadvantages' of democracy. But the greatest heartbreak of the year, where aspirations proved to be aeons away from reality, was the abortion of the transition in Nigeria.

The causes of the annulment will long be a source of dispute, and the full effects of June 23 are yet to be absorbed by the Nigerian body politic. But the end product is that, fore the time being, there is a military-controlled government where Nigerians had hoped they were getting rid of the soldiers. All that they have to comfort them is the "spirit of June 12", and it remains to be seen how strong that aspiration is now.

It was one of the great ironies of the year that November 17, the date the accord to set up the Transition Council in South Africa, seen as finally ushering in the irreversible process towards the elections of April 1994, was also the date of General Abacha's takeover. One might wish it, but it has yet to be demonstrated that November 17 will be a date of salvation in Nigeria's own history. WA

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Remembering the Manding conference

ONE OF THE virtues of a grand assembly like that of American Africanists in Boston, (on which I reported at length last week) is the way in which, aside from formal sessions, there is always the happy coincidence of chance meetings - the possibility of putting faces to names that have been rattling around in publications one has been reading for years. One can also pick up threads of interests long since past, or subject matters long forgotten. Take, for instance, the Manding conference. This was a remarkable *Afrikafest* held for a week in London in 1972, with a programme of lectures, seminars, exhibitions, music from some of the most remarkable griots around in Mali and The Gambia - all focused on the culture and ramifications of the old Mali empire - still an abiding force in the western part of West Africa today. This experience opened my eyes to so many things about the sub-region, and it still lives in my mind's eye today, a part of my West African mental furniture. I can recall Senghor coming to a lecture, and taking part in it from the audience. I was also privileged to chair a talk at the Africa Centre by the late Guinean writer Camara Laye, a remarkable human being and writer. *Le Regard du Roi* is very high in my all-time world list of great works of the imagination.

The Nko alphabet

ALL THIS IS by way of introduction to a discussion I had with a Guinean researcher in Boston, by the name of Fude Baba Conde, of the University of Kankan in Upper Guinea. He was in the US to try and arrange further studies there of Malinke society in Upper Guinea. One of his areas of interest is the Nko alphabet - the transcription of the Manding language (which covers a range of different appellations, from Malinke in Guinea, Dioula in Cote d'Ivoire, Bambara in Mali, Mandinka in The Gambia, Soce in Senegal, Mandingo in Liberia, and other related languages stretching across a wide swathe of West Africa). The Nko alphabet was invented by Souleymane Kante, a great scholar from Soumankoyin-Kolonin in the area of Kankan, a city known through the savannah as an Islamic centre, whence many religious leaders have come. It is an alphabet with 27 characters - seven vowels, nineteen consonants and a neutral sound best transliterated in the Roman alphabet as " n' ".

According to Conde, in the course of Kante's life (1922-87) he translated and transcribed the Koran into Nko. He also produced "The history of the Manding over 4,000 years, from 2764 BC to 1234 AD" in 120 pages, as well as the Manding Constitution, elaborated by the ruler of the Mali Empire, Soundiata Keita, in 1236. The major work, however, is the first Nko dictionary of 32,500 words, prepared by Kante in 1968, and finally printed in Cairo in 1982. The works have had a certain success in Manding-speaking areas in Guinea, Mali and Cote d'Ivoire, and each year on the anniversary of Kante's death a conference is held on the teaching of Nko. The aim is neither academic nor folkloric, but to propagate a practical tool in the preservation of what Conde calls "the most commercial language in all West Africa."

I found it encouraging to be made aware of all this activity, and even though, in spite of the dreams of David Dalby, there was never a follow-up in Africa to the London "congress", there is a Manding Studies Association (MANSA) in North America: like numerous other academic groups, they held their business meeting in the margin of the ASA in Boston, and like ASA they will be holding their next conference in Toronto.

Against taking sides

AS A FOLLOW-UP to our profile last week of Pierre Sané, the Secretary-General of Amnesty international, I should record he seems to have been getting a good press in different places, after his earlier roughing-up from *The Times*. Apart from having a "page two" interview in *Le Monde* - "the egghead equivalent of a page three in *The Sun*", said one Senegalese - there was a good half-page spread in *The Observer* of London. This was adorned with an "art" photograph of Sané by Jane Bown, the newspaper's world-class photographer, a survivor of the Astor years. The story by Sweeney recalled that Amnesty had actually been launched in an article in *The Observer* 32 years ago. It is also worth using Sweeney's words to retell an amusing incident at Sané's LSE Human Rights Day lecture (also see last week's issue). "After the talk questions were asked from the floor. A seagreen incorruptible from the Campaign Against Militarism (bosom pal of *Living Marxism* magazine) gave a prickly speech, attacking Amnesty for perpetuating the untruth that something could be done about human rights without taking sides". Sané did not lose his dignity under fire. "Taking sides means that you are absolutely sure of the rightness of your side. We fight for a space, so that everyone can be free to take their side, even if they make mistakes. That is why we are impartial".

Methuselah shows off

IT HAS BEEN a strange and difficult year, that I for one am glad to see behind me, marked as I was by the serious crisis we went through early in the year. But it was also the year in which West Africa Publishing launched its first book with due ceremony at the beginning of July. Although we have largely been depending on self-selling, the publicity we have generated for the book in the magazine , notably the advertisement on our inside back cover, has been able to pull in a respectable amount of sales, and next year we will be launching it where it should be launched, in the sub-region itself, beginning with one in Ghana in January. Reactions have been uniformly favourable, and I managed to nab a number of most distinguished buyers at the ASA in Boston. The way in which some seem to cherish the book prompts me to draw attention to a little change we have introduced - the rearrangement of 'From our files" to include extracts from the magazine of 75 years ago. Thus does Methuselah profit from his extreme age, although in fact it should have been happening since February 1992. They also say of old men that they forget. Over to those of our readers that have not yet remembered to purchase their copies of *West Africa over 75 Years*, who may have been stimulated by this piece, or even by the new three-part "files", the above-mentioned sales advert on the inside back cover.

Kaye Whiteman

Julie Coker, Nigerian television pioneer

A lifetime on the box

MISS JULIE COKER joined Western Nigeria Television (WNTV-WNBS) on November 11, 1959, early enough to contribute significantly to the pioneering efforts of the television company credited with being the first in Africa. "Apart from the arrival of my first child," says the broadcaster, "the highest point of my life was the day I first appeared on television."

Since that first appearance as an announcer, Miss Coker has gone on and on and in over 34 years of dedication to a profession which she believes was a gift from God. She has become an institution.

One of the first African women to appear on TV, she promptly reminds you that Anike Agbaje-Williams was the first, but she was not far behind. In any case, she has remained in the trade to become the longest serving television personality probably in the world, certainly in Africa.

Miss Coker has picked up the baton in the campaign for the advancement of women in the broadcasting industry. She is currently doing research for a work entitled *A Contemporary Study of the Women in Broadcasting*.

The struggle for women's liberation was given a boost when television was introduced into Africa. The very nature of television makes the industry one of the major employers of them. Announcers, newsreaders, presenters are mostly women. "These are quite important positions when you take into consideration the fact that these people are the public faces of the television industry" says Coker, who joined the broadcasting company six weeks after it opened.

Educated at St Mary's Convent School and Holy Child College in Lagos, she easily admits that she acquired all the knowledge she has within the educational institution that is broadcasting. "You just have to read and continue reading as one cannot present any programme you know nothing about."

The veteran broadcaster lists, amongst many others, meeting people as one of her major interests. This is another form of educating oneself. One of her pet programmes was called *My Guest*, a personality profiling programme on which many important personalities in Africa appeared to discuss their achievements and express their views concerning contemporary issues. She played hostess to many dignitaries such as Sir Adetokunbo Ademola, Chief Chris Ogunbanjo, Chief Justice Fatai-Williams and many others. Jointly with ex-husband Mike Enahoro she also presented *Lagos Scope*, which lasted several years. The volume of work put into this programme was enormous, researching, interviewing and recording.

The star of several independence celebrations in Nigeria, she is always quick to remind you that she was the first woman ever to give a commentary during an Independence Day celebration in Nigeria. She is of course also the star of *Julie's Choice*.

An accomplished entertainer it was always exciting and wonderfully amusing to watch Julie Coker move gracefully around the golden-sand of the Bar Beach when again with Mike Enahoro pioneered the *Bar Beach Show*.

The former Miss Western Nigeria was a beauty queen who successfully 'lived down' the social stigma attached to such titles in the Africa of those days.

After working for the WNTV-WNBS, Coker worked at NTA in many capacities. She is regarded by many graduates of the FRCN training school as an accomplished instructor. Highly loyal to her profession, she is often fierce in the defence of the industry. and with her combination of talent and beauty she has warmed her way into the hearts of many and has remained one of the most sought after television personalities over the past three and a half decades.

Always on the look out for new angles and innovations in her bid to "leave behind a lasting contribution" to the development of television in Nigeria, Coker is currently an Assistant Executive Director with the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA). In that capacity she has been involved in the production of many widely acclaimed programmes. As a programmes coordinator at the NTA, her selection "Moment of Truth", produced by Peter Igho, beat several other highly rated programmes from other parts of Africa to win the URTNA award in 1983. Coker often mentions this as one of the highlights of her career.

Once described at a public function as a broadcaster of immeasurable talent, Miss Coker has successfully dabbled in music, producing three very successful albums in the process. These are well distributed in Nigeria. She has also recently published a book, *My Television Years*.

Coker believes that Nigeria's broadcasters rank amongst the best in the world. What the country needs, she says, is an improvement in the quality of equipment at the disposal of the industry in Nigeria. She believes that the introduction of independent television companies will give a well needed fillip to the industry in Nigeria.

She helped with the process of commercialising the TV industry in Nigeria and it was during her time at the marketing section of the NTA that the plans for independent commercial broadcasting companies were developed.

After a lifetime on television Coker, who has often said she cannot imagine herself retiring from the industry, may be called upon to do just that soon. There is a law in Nigeria that bars civil servants from being in service for more than 35 years.

She will be well missed by Nigerian television viewers when she goes. But obituary writers should put aside their pens: Miss Julie Coker does not plan to leave the scene yet. WA

NIGERIA

One turbulent year

1993 WAS THAT sort of year. In both the crucial spheres of politics and economics, there was hardly cause for celebration. President Ibrahim Babangida's promised handover of power had been postponed for an unprecedented third time. And hardly any of the numerous economic gains said to be tied to his regime's structural adjustment programme (SAP) had materialised in the homes of the increasingly pauperised populace.

So, the first month of the year cried for answers to two nagging questions. First, what political game plan will Babangida now proffer to guarantee that August 27, the latest date for the inception of democratic government, will be for real? Second, what magic wand would be waved by the anticipated budget so as to begin to arrest the gradual but insistent process of economic capitulation starring the country in the face?

The political question was the first to be addressed by Babangida who established a 14-member National Defence and Security Council (NDSC) to replace the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) as the highest decision-making body in the country. He also set up a 29-member cabinet, called the Transitional Council (TC), to "run the day-to-day affairs of the state". Chief Ernest Shonekan, last employed as the chairman of United African Company, was appointed head of the TC. He said his council had been given the "daunting task" of salvaging the economy and instituting a credible democratic ethos. In eight months!

The new method for the presidential election which now remained before all levels of governance could be reclaimed by civilians was called Option A4. The presidential election itself was scheduled for June 12.

Chief Shonekan presented the budget on January 27, promising that fiscal discipline would be uncompromisingly pursued. The bane of the previous budgets had been gargantuan extra-budgetary expenditure, poor implementation of set objectives and overpowering deficits. The 1991 budget had a deficit of N35.3 billion. In 1992 the deficit leapt to N43.8 billion.

A clear reading of Shonekan's budget showed from day one that it had a built-in deficit of N28.6 billion. The entire package was indexed on the Opec price of oil being $17.5 per barrel. Darkly, Shonekan hinted that the "subsidy" on the local price of oil would be removed because "we cannot shy away from resolving this fundamental issue."

On February 3, the poverty of the economy began to send backlashes on the nation, with civil servants in the employ of state governments embarked on an indefinite strike. The Federal Government had approved a 45 per cent across the board pay rise for embattled civil servants as a way of cushioning the shattering effect of inflation which had literally shot through the roof. But the scheme was short on implementation. Only federal civil servants got the salary increases. Their counterparts in the states had to first go on strike before a haphazard attempt was made to address the problem.

But the striking civil servants did not seize the headlines for any length of time. For Nigerians, all things including life sometimes must halt when politics is in full flow. The 22 presidential aspirants banned by Babangida at the end of 1992 had gone away to lick their wounds. Nobody explained why they

Gen Sani Abacha

got kicked where it hurt badly; the decree empowering the ban of politicians had no provision for such niceties. Still there was a surfeit of candidates intent on filling the vacuum created by those already shown the red card. By mid February, an amalgam of known and unknown politicians numbering 352 and wishing one and all to be president had collected nomination forms.

General Yakubu Gowon, toppled in the coup of 1975 after running Nigeria for all of nine years, was back. So was Chief Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, his civil war adversary. M.K.O. Abiola, who had said he was not interested in politics, pitched his camp with the Social Democratic Party (SDP). Alhaji Bashir Tofa, better know as a business man and for calling for Babangida to remain in power until the turn of the century, had dug in for the National Republican Convention (NRC). Commentators began talking of exciting primaries and one hell of a presidential contest.

The dominant Babangida political motif of banning was brought into play again and many, including Ojukwu, were told to stop. Gowon escaped the ban but he got thoroughly thrashed in the primaries. By mid March, the wheat had been separated from the chaff as the also rans joined those who could not afford the N500,000 registration fee. At the end of March only 50 or so candidates were still in the race. The party conventions threw up Abiola (SDP) and Tofa (NRC) as the presidential candidates. Subsequently Tofa chose Dr Sylvester Ugoh as his running mate while Abiola settled for Ambassador Baba Gana Kingibe.

Throughout April, the air waves were jammed with party jingles. The newspapers were overrun with political commercials. On billboards across the country the electorate was pelted with messages. The politicians promised to do this and this and that and everything. The campaigns gathered strength during May as the candidates toured the country, mostly by air, barnstorming.

But not even the din of the hustings could drown out the noise of trouble on the educational front. On May 3, members of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) began an indefinite strike. During September of 1992, ASUU and the government had reached agreement on the funding of universities, staff conditions of service and institutional autonomy. Government, said the union, had reneged on the agreement. By going on strike, therefore, the union intended to blow the whistle on bad faith.

All the same the political authority felt more threatened by the power of the media than by university teachers who had fled the classrooms. For on May 6, it promulgated a decree which stipulated the death penalty for treasonable publications. This raised a disturbing question. Why would a regime that had promised to self destruct in four months be enacting such a draconian law?

During June, the United Nations published the league table of World Development Index stating the prosperity rating of countries. Of the 173 countries surveyed, oil-rich Nigeria placed a dismal 142nd. In other words, the uniformed managers of SAP and the vaunted benefits of the programme had left the country better than only 31 others in the whole world.

Perhaps it helped to encourage the people to go out en masse and vote in the presidential election of June 12. True to the promise which Babangida made in January when Baroness Lynda Chalker, the British Overseas Development Minister, visited Abuja, international observers were in Nigeria in full force to witness the election. In addition, the government itself set up a National Election Monitoring Group (NEMG). At the end of the voting, both the international observers and the NEMG pronounced the exercise the freest, fairest and most peaceful in the history of Nigeria.

On June 14, a seven-member Presidential Election Tribunal headed by Mr Justice Bolarinwa Babalakin was sworn in to hear petitions that might arise from the election. The *Daily Times*, a Lagos-based daily, published an editorial opinion saying that "every Nigerian deserves to partake in the present communal conviviality (occasioned by the

successful presidential election.) But more importantly, we must not fail to commend the National Electoral Commission (NEC) headed by Professor Humphrey Nwosu, the electoral officials, the monitoring group, the security agents, the law enforcement agents in general."

On June 16, the NEC halted the release of election results "until further notice". By the time it took this sudden and unexpected decision, Abiola was far ahead of his opponent in about half the results already released. NEC said it halted the announcement of the results in deference to a court order. But NEC had not honoured an earlier order issued on June 10 to postpone the election. In any case, Section 19(1) of the Presidential Election (Basic Constitution and Transition Provision) Decree 13 of 1993 completely ousted the power of the courts in the conduct of the election.

On June 23, Babangida annulled the election. He said a new ballot would be conducted. But why had he annulled the one of June 12? The European Union and the United States immediately imposed sanctions on Nigeria. Nigeria was visited by unprecedented bad press. And at home the umbrage of the people was palpable.

July 5 saw the start of a string of protests organised by the Campaign for Democracy, the umbrella organisation of civil and democratic rights bodies. The demonstrations turned violent and were ruthlessly suppressed by the military. The BBC later said over 100 people had been killed in the riots. Government moved further to close down five media houses and Mr Uche Chukwumerije, the Information Minister, said this was "in the light of continuous excesses on their part." People read the move as the arrival of a new cold and iron age.

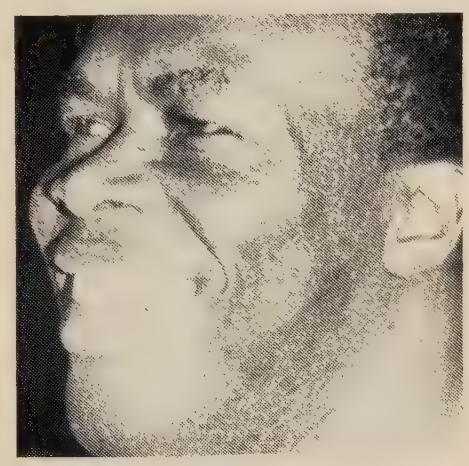
The second round of organised campaign against the annulment of the presidential election took place from August 12-14, paralysing businesses mostly in the south west of the country which is Abiola's power base. August's significance, however, is in the fact that it is the month Babangida said he would quit power. He did not seem entirely keen on the prospect. But he left on August 26 all the same, "in thinly veiled disgrace" to quote the words of Abiola. After 31 years in the Army and eight years as President of the country, Babangida's closest allies in the military showed him the red card. He had become the unacceptable face of military wantonness.

Chief Shonekan was sworn in August 27 as Head of State. He said his Interim Government would organise a fresh presidential election for February 19 1994. He released civil rights activists thrown into gaol by Babangida. He cited this as demonstration that he was nobody's puppet. But he refused to order the reopening of the media houses proscribed by Babangida, saying it was up to the National Assembly to tackle that question.

September brought some bad news in its wake. On the fifth of the month seven Nigerian soldiers serving with the UNISOM in Somalia were killed in an ambush set up by the forces of General Mohammed Farah Aideed. In June Army Chief of Staff Salihu Ibrahim had announced the killing of four Nigerian soldiers serving with the UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Force) in former Yugoslavia.

On September 24, Abiola who had spent 54 days in Europe and America campaigning against the annulment of the June 12 election which he was widely believed to have won, returned to Nigeria and the tumultuous welcome of his supporters. ASUU called off its five-month old strike "in the interest of our students, their parents, and the survival of the university system." The government had accepted to honour the obligations it earlier entered into.

At the start of October, Chief Shonekan's Interim Government appointed an eight-man panel headed by Mr Justice Mamman Nasir, the retired Appeal Court president, to probe the annulled June 12 election. But when Shonekan got to New York for the United Nations General Assembly meeting, he told journalists that the results of the Nasir probe will be deposited at the national archives for future generations of Nigerians to learn from! After New York, Shonekan headed for Cyprus for the Commonwealth Heads of Government summit which took place from October 21-25.



Nwosu: chair of defunct NEC

By November Shonekan's Interim Government was virtually in disarray. The excesses of some of the members of the government had brought about an alienation it could ill afford. It was taking a resounding battering in the media. Its credibility crisis deepened by the day. It had no mandate to govern. It was the creation of a military hierarchy now in disrepute. It was not in a position to address the central problem in the country, the annulled presidential election.

It was in this state of compounded crisis that Shonekan's government announced on November 8 a 700 percent rise in fuel prices. Professor Sam Aluko, an internationally respected economist, described the increase as sheer madness. He added that fuel, as a macro economic variable, would affect all prices, cost of living, interest rate and the cost of running government. The Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC) embarked on an indefinite nationwide strike after its 72-hour ultimatum for government to cancel the fuel price increase went unheeded.

On November 10 Justice Dolapo Akinsanya of the Lagos High Court pronounced Shonekan's government an illegality. She said while giving judgement in a case brought by Moshood Abiola that Decree 61, the Interim Government Basic Constitutional Provisions Decree which established the government, had not been legally instituted because at the time it was promulgated Babangida had no constitutional right to sign the decree. Strangely Shonekan moved into Aso Rock, the seat of government proper, after this. Someone had apparently left with the keys on August 26.

But it was to be the shortest stay in a Nigerian State House by a national leader. For on November 17 General Sani Abacha, the Defence Minister, Lieutenant General Donaldson Oladipo Diya, the Chief of Defence Staff, and Major General Aliyu Mohammed, the Chief of Army Staff, visited Shonekan and told him the ball game was over. Shonekan's "government" was at its end, not given the chance to celebrate its first 100 days. General Abacha became the new head of State instantly. And in a broadcast of less than 10 minutes, he demolished all the democratic structures put in place during the eight years of Babangida's tedious transition to civil rule programme. On November 27, 17 senior army officers were retired with immediate effect. The list included Brigadier-General Halilu Akilu, Babangida's head of intelligence, and Brigadier General John Shagaya who was on deployment in Liberia as Field Commander of Ecomog.

The military government on December 9 sworn in 30 military governors to run the states. Earlier a federal cabinet made up mostly of politicians was swore in. The ministers include Alhaji Baba Gana Kingibe, Abiola's running mate in the June election who was appointed Foreign Minister, and Dr Olu Onagoruwa, a non-politician who had spent many years opposing military regimes, as Justice Minister and Attorney General.

Even though most of the ministers had joined the Abacha regime simply to kill boredom and utilise the platform of public office to regain the political initiative, the story they have been spreading is that they accepted the national call in order to help prevent the country from disintegration! Of course there is the allure of a Constitutional Conference which Abacha threw in during his maiden broadcast. Only the passage of time will tell what the anticipated conference would amount to.

In all, it has been one turbulent year. It is farewell to 1993 as 1994 rolls in, a sequence endless in itself and evocative of the primal lines of Christopher Okigbo, the late, great poet who wrote in *Path of Thunder* that:

An old star departs, leaves us here on the shore

Gazing heavenward for a new star approaching;

The new star appears, foreshadows its going

Before a going and coming that goes on forever...

Chuks Iloegbunam

A year of difficult learning

The political education in 1993 of the young soldiers at the helm was an arduous one, writes Desmond Davies

FOR THOSE SOLDIERS in power who would want to run as civilian politicians when Sierra Leone returns to democratic politics in 1995, the events of 1993 could well dampen their enthusiasm. It was a year in which the military rulers came under fire from all fronts—more so the political one.

After the extra-judicial killings of 26 political prisoners in November and December of 1992 for allegedly plotting to overthrow the government, 1993 was heralded by an international outcry over the executions. The soldiers were taken aback by the worldwide response of outrage.

EC ambassadors in Freetown issued a statement in January condemning the killings: "Extra-judicial killings of some prisoners and the immediate execution of other people without fair trial or possibly without any trial at all...mark a violent and severe breach of fundamental human rights." The British government waded in by suspending aid on the grounds of the regime's disregard for human rights.

The soldiers went on the defensive and in trying to explain their action they came unstuck. Their inexperience was exposed when they tried to defend their position. For example, rather than allay the fears expressed by the British government, a statement issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs in Freetown blasted Whitehall for seemingly supporting the APC's political and economic destruction of the country when it was in power.

Captain Valentine Strasser's response to the assembled EC diplomats was even more puerile. He blamed lack of Western support for the rehabilitation of the judicial system for the hasty action in dealing with the alleged coup plotters. He told the EC representatives that they "will know that 'justice delayed is justice denied.' When the NPRC took over last April, we appealed to friendly Western powers and donor agencies for assistance in rehabilitating the judicial system with an infusion of funds for rebuilding the Law Courts and the provision of personnel and material, all geared to reducing unacceptable delays, even though we had pointed out that such assistance is necessary to support human rights."

The Bar Association added its voice to the issue when its members called on the government to scrap Decree 12, under which both the executed soldiers and civilians were tried before a Military Tribunal. The association said under this decree the accused had no right of appeal.

Speaking to the BBC in January, the president of the Bar Association, Mr George Banda-Thomas, said: "What we object to is setting up a Special Military Tribunal to try civilians as well as service personnel. We believe that this is basically wrong, especially when the other courts of the land are still functioning. All it means in actual fact is for the government to create the right type of atmosphere for the operation of these courts."

Strasser: making progress

But the government argued otherwise. Capt Strasser explained: "In late November (1992), the government considered various measures to combat the deteriorating security situation in the country and one of the agreed measures was the establishment of the Special Military Tribunal (SMT) to try persons, civilians as well as members of the armed forces, engaged in acts of rebellion, sabotage, murder, etc." He said when Decree 12 came into force on December 7, 1992, the legal profession did not complain.

He added: "It is, therefore, surprising that it is only now that protests against alleged human rights violation are being voiced. The SMT has been duly constituted under our laws..." The NPRC chairman took offence at the EC protest, and complained that "it is unwarranted, false and misleading. The tribunal was set up, hearings took place, evidence (was) heard against the accused and they were convicted."

In all this, the overriding factor was the rebel war raging in the Eastern and Southern provinces. The fighting had engulfed the diamond-rich district of Kono and this was hamstringing the economy in the sense that exports of the mineral were severely curtailed. It was in this context that the military regime, according to Capt Strasser, decided "to take all effective and stringent measures necessary to combat swiftly whatever acts of rebellion...that were perpetrated against the state so as to prevent the undermining of the state's security."

He said one of the measures was the establishment of the SMT "as an alternative to the traditional legal system." He explained that "Sierra Leone is experiencing the first internal and external war in its history, and we are obliged in the circumstances to take measures, however regrettably harsh and severe, to ensure that the war is speedily and effectively concluded."

The war itself appears to be drawing to a close, according to Capt Strasser's statement when he announced about a month ago the transitional programme to returning the country to "democratic constitutional rule". The government had earlier offered an amnesty to those rebels who were willing to lay down their arms. The amnesty was renewed when Capt Strasser made his announcement that it "is evident from recent reports...that the rebel war is becoming a thing of the past..."

In between, the soldiers went through trials and tribulations as they attempted to justify their actions. Although Capt Strasser, in his address on the first anniversary of the coup in April, noted a "new sense of discipline and dedication in many spheres of our national life", the storm clouds were gathering.

The deputy chairman of the NPRC, Captain Solomon Musa, was being accused of causing mayhem. He was said to be the one responsible for sanctioning the extra-judicial killings of November and December 1992, without the knowledge of Capt Strasser. The dastardly acts of the regime were put down to him. Those close to him said he was given to going into a paroxysm of violence when crossed—such as the beating up of defenceless journalists who wrote articles he did not take kindly to.

Was Capt Musa the tyrant he was made out to be or was he being used as a scapegoat? The question has now become all the more relevant following whispers in Freetown that Capt Strasser left the country unannounced on three occasions, much to the chagrin of Capt Musa. Sierra Leoneans described these clandestine trips with all sorts of connotations. The constant allegation was that the trips were made to sell illegally mined diamonds.

One foreign newspaper, *Expressen* of Stockholm, the biggest-selling daily in Scandinavia, published a story in its September 26 issue along these lines. The report was picked up by a Freetown magazine, *New Breed*, which did not go down well with the soldiers in power. Members of the magazine's journalistic and administrative staff were arrested and detained.

The matter was not allowed to rest as a London-based monthly, *The New Patriot*, repeated the story. Soon after, the magazine received a writ filed in the High Court of London demanding an apology, which the publication is currently fighting. In the meantime, the original author of the article, Tommy Schonstedt of *Expressen*, sent a faxed message to the London-based international magazine for free expression, *Index on Censorship*, in which he replied to a question about whether legal proceedings had been started against his newspaper.

Schonstedt replied: "The answer is no--as far as I know. I should know if they have done something like that." But he admitted: "About a month ago, I got a telephone call from a lawyer in London--working for the Sierra Leone government--who said: `Do you know that the government will sue you and take you to court in Sweden?' I said: `You are welcome. I am ready.'"

In a note to *The New Patriot*'s news editor, Michael Chukwu, *Index on Censorship*'s Philip Spender pointed out that "it looks as if the Sierra Leone government is picking on the weaker of the two."

But back to Capt Musa. In July he had been unceremoniously booted out from his position. The government's dramatic decision, an official statement explained, was motivated by a number of developments, which sources said were related to the way Capt Musa handled the matter.

On July 5, the day the government first announced the snap reshuffle, Capt Musa's position as deputy Chairman was intact. But then he decided to take matters into his owns hands by rushing over to the studios of the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service to demand the withdrawal of the announcement because he had not been consulted before the changes were made.

Lieutenant Karefa Kargbo, then acting Secretary, Foreign Affairs, told diplomats that the negative local and international press reports about Capt Musa, even though not correct, had resulted in putting pressure on him and this had eventually altered his relationship with Capt Strasser and other members of the NPRC.

Capt Musa was allowed safe passage out of the country after seeking refuge in the Nigerian High Commission. He is supposed to be studying in the UK, but several attempts by journalists to get him to talk have proved unsuccessful. He has been keeping a low profile and feeling quite depressed because of his absence from the limelight, according to sources.

Those Sierra Leoneans who believed that the coup that brought the NPRC to power would herald a new period of stability, were quickly disillusioned when reports earlier in the year spoke of the over-zealousness of soldiers, both within the regime and in the army itself. They were grabbing everything worthwhile they could lay their hands on and were strutting around in an arrogant manner. The belief was that since they had overthrown the APC, after 24 year of ruinous policies, they had a right to behave in a high-handed manner. However, the NPRC has been able to curb the excesses of the soldiers by taking disciplinary action against those who stepped out of line.

On the economic front, the country has made a relatively strong improvement on the APC era. Gone are the days when the currency would fluctuate crazily against other currencies. The official figure for the leone to the pound has been around the 800 mark for some time now.

With the end of the rebel war in sight and the announcement of the transition programme, the NPRC has been "afforded the opportunity of turning its attention more fully to the economic and social needs of the country with a view to enhancing the living standards of the average Sierra Leonean", as Capt Strasser put it.

Although he did not elaborate on the way this will be achieved, promising to give more details later, the NPRC Chairman assured potential and local investors "that during the rest of this administration, we shall spare no effort in creating an enabling environment for private sector investment."

In the budget earlier in the year the strategy for providing incentives for the private sector was outlined. For starters, the government reduced domestic borrowing for the first time in the country's fiscal history and was able to significantly reduce its domestic debt.

Throughout the year, the various commissions of inquiry set up by the regime to probe the improprieties of government ministers and officials of the APC presented their reports to the NPRC, which then released White Papers outlining the line of action taken against those found guilty of unlawfully acquiring wealth while in office. Many had their assets seized and others had to pay back money while others were summarily dismissed.

The revelations were stunning. Public officials stole money from government coffers with gay abandon. There was no limit to the greed displayed by these people. Many Sierra Leoneans welcomed the commissions and the action taken by the government against the plunderers of the nation's wealth.

So, after a difficult learning process throughout the year, the NPRC has weathered the political storm and has come up with a transition timetable that will see a civilian president taking the oath of office in January 1996. The announcement has been well received locally and internationally and it is now left to the NPRC to honour its promise to the people of Sierra Leone.

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A fluctuating year

It has been a year of toing and froing in the search for lasting peace

THE YEAR IS ending as it started: with the various warring factions at each other's throat. This time round they have been squabbling over seats on the Transitional Council of State and the allocation of Cabinet positions. At the time of writing the factions had reached agreement to get the Council going.

But there were other issues of contention throughout the year. One had to do with providing food for tens of thousands of starving people. The UN's role in this came in for severe criticism when it was reported that two of the world body's officials were trying to score points against each other on the matter of distributing food.

The UN special envoy to Liberia, Trevor Gordon-Somers, in one of his reports in 1992 admitted that "the most direct route and convenient route (to bring in food) continues to be via Cote d'Ivoire." But when, after the Cotonou Peace Accord on July 25 1993, James Jonah, UN under-secretary for Political Affairs, gave orders for food to be transmitted through Cote d'Ivoire, Gordon-Somers opposed the move, claiming that Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) would use the convoy to bring in arms and ammunition.

The NPFL, indeed, contributed to the halting of relief supplies by intercepting food convoys. In one instance, in August, 352 tonnes of food aid was stopped from reaching starving people at Gbaama in the north-east when 50 NPFL rebels halted the train at Yakepa and ordered that food be taken off the train for them.

Suggestions that supplies should be dropped from the air were quickly ruled out by the Liberian representative in charge of relief services, Father Kenneth Fandimeh. He then ordered relief trains loaded with food and medicine to remain in Yekepa until they could get safe passage.

Since then there has been a deadlock over unblocking food aid. According to aid workers, efforts to distribute food have been hit by the delay in reaching agreement over how it should be transported. Nine aid organisations active in the country have warned that their stocks are running low and have appealed to the warring factions, Ecomog and the UN to help them bring food to all areas.

In between there were acts of brutality from both sides--the NPFL and the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL). One act which stood out, though, during the year was the massacre of 600 people at the Carter Camp, a refugee centre some 65 kilometres outside Monrovia. The incident took place on the night of June 5-6.

The initial response from the Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU), headed by President Amos Sawyer, was that the NPFL was guilty. The act itself so shocked the world that the UN secretary-general, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, ordered a "thorough and full investigation ...including any allegation as to the perpetrators, whoever they may be." It was indeed a dastardly act. The 600, mainly women, children and the elderly, were systematically killed and their bodies mutilated.

Of all the groups contesting power in Liberia, the NPFL has been the most wary of surrendering its arms and ammunition. Taylor dragged his feet on this issue throughout the year. He never trusted Ecomog to undertake an impartial disarmament of the factions. Now with the presence of soldiers from regions other than West Africa, the NPFL could feel a lot more reassured in handing over its weapons.

The UN report found that the massacre was carried out by members of the AFL and not by the NPFL as was earlier intimated. Testimony was received by survivors and eyewitnesses. The report's executive summary noted: "Credible, consistent and persuasive accounts received from 33 survivors and five other witnesses in locations widely separated and isolated from each other; corroborating evidence collected in the field and from close to 50 other sources; and the results of careful analysis of other investigations conducted into the Carter Camp massacre (showed that) the massacre...was planned and executed by units of the Armed Forces of Liberia. The NPFL, Ecomog and Ulimo had no role in the murder..."

The IGNU, which had carried out a preliminary investigation into the massacre and had blamed the NPFL, expressed reservations about the report. While not discrediting the report, the IGNU said the UN team's findings should be subjected to further and rigorous scrutiny.

The furore over the massacre, however, did not deter the warring factions from meeting in Cotonou and striking a deal to set up the INGU. The agreement stipulated that there would be a transitional government to run the country for six months. The government will have three branches--the Executive, the Judiciary and Legislature--and a five-member Council of State.

After three years of bitter fighting and several botched attempts to find peace, the warring factions called a ceasefire. The move even surprised IGNU President Sawyer who said so in an exclusive interview with *West Africa* just before the Ecowas summit in Cotonou. He said: "I think we have surprised ourselves in as much as it is possible that we can have a government that can be tolerant and that people can interact without fear; that it is possible to have a Presidency that is demystified and it is also possible to emphasise the humanity of people, rather than to disguise it in regal form.

"There is compassion. There is an emergence of Liberian associations of all types engaged in different types of activities. I've never seen such a wide spectrum of Liberian NGOs, for example, as we have now. All of this has come out of this whole effort of Liberians trying to find a way to cope."

The disarmament process, though, has been a more difficult problem to overcome. However, with the expected arrival of troops from other African countries at the end of the year to bolster Ecomog, the uncertainty about peace could have been quelled to some extent. The troops joining Ecomog were supposed to come from Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe. They were being supported by 300 observers from the UN in the disarmament exercise.

Of all the groups contesting power in Liberia, the NPFL has been the most wary of surrendering its arms and ammunition. Taylor dragged his feet on this issue throughout the year. He never trusted Ecomog to undertake an impartial disarmament of the factions. Now with the presence of soldiers from regions other than West Africa, the NPFL could feel a lot more reassured in handing over its weapons.

The fact that the Transitional Council has decided to begin proceedings without the disarmament process getting underway, augurs well for peace in Liberia. It was touch and go throughout 1993, but the parties expressed a determined resolve to bring the country back from the brink in which it found itself at the beginning of the year.

D.D.

A hectic year

The year 1993 will be noted as the year when important breakthroughs were made on the political front in much of the trouble spots, writes Barbara Akakpo

LIKE THE PREVIOUS year the focus was mainly on political developments in South Africa. The Multiparty Negotiating Process determined that April 27 1994 would be the date of South Africa's first non racial democratic elections. Nelson Mandela, president of the ANC, and President de Klerk were jointly awarded the 1993 Nobel Prize for their efforts to dismantle apartheid.

As the ANC called for an end to economic sanctions, the call for foreign investment gained momentum with both Mr Derek Keys, South Africa's finance minister, and Mandela both inviting foreign investors to the country.

However the anti-apartheid struggle suffered two setbacks with the deaths of both Chris Hani, Secretary General of the ANC, and Oliver Tambo. Tens of thousands of black protestors took to the streets of South Africa following the assassination of Hani who was gunned down outside his home on April 10.

The ANC suffered a further setback on April 24 when its national chairman Mr Tambo, 75, died in hospital after he suffered from a stroke. Tambo was president of the ANC for over three decades, much of which was spent in exile.

The right wing too suffered a loss with the death of Dr Andries Treurnicht, leader of the white supremacist Conservative Party (CP) who died in hospital aged 72. Treurnicht founded the South African Conservative Party 11 years ago to fight political changes that he feared would lead to the dismantling of apartheid.

By any standards it has been a hectic year for South Africa. Multiparty talks went ahead despite several setbacks, most notably the decision of the Freedom Alliance to remain outside the negotiation process. In the end the multi-party negotiators triumphed and on December 7 the first blacks took their seats on a multi-racial Transitional Executive Council which is charged with overseeing government until elections next year.

In Malawi a date for the country's first multi-party elections was set at May 17 1994 which should end 26 years of one party rule. Malawi's opposition leaders claimed a substantial victory at the June 14 referendum on whether or not to introduce multiparty democracy. President Banda called on Malawians to register as voters in large numbers to enable them to vote in the referendum on whether or not they wanted to end one party rule.

Two-thirds of the country's 25 districts gave more than 80 per cent support to the opposition campaign. For the first time in nearly 30 years, voters turned out in droves to decide the fate of Life President Banda's one party rule. According to the official referendum commission, 63.5 per cent of Malawians turned out to vote.

Also, human rights activists achieved a major victory with the release of Vera Chirwa, wife of the late Orton Chirwa. She was reunited with her family in Lilongwe after serving 12 years of a life sentence for treason. Her pardon by President Banda came months after the death in prison of her husband Orton, 73.

A crisis broke out recently following the illness of Banda. Both the government and the opposition appear to be taken unawares and there was much disagreement within the ranks of both groups as to the way forward. Banda underwent brain surgery at the Garden City Clinic in Johannesburg.

Amidst all the confusion in Angola, perhaps the most positive event of the year was the Clinton Administration's formal recognition of the MPLA government on May 19. The recognition marked a major shift in US foreign policy towards Africa, especially the policies of the previous Republican administrations.

Several peace talks took place during the year. Talks in Abidjan between Angolan government and the rebel movement Unita reached an impasse as Unita announced that it will not withdraw from towns and villages it has occupied since the restarting of the war last October. The Abidjan talks are the third round of peace talks hosted by the UN.

Sadly, throughout most of the year as the fighting between he warring factions intensified, Angola was on the verge of total breakdown, with disease and hunger threatening the lives of three million people. Apart from stopping the war, the biggest challenge in Angola today is providing humanitarian assistance to people isolated by the war. However getting across battle lines has proved a difficult task for the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies.

The United Nations special representative in Mozambique Aldo Ajello suggested that the country's first multi-party presidential and parliamentary elections scheduled to take place in October this year be postponed until October 1994. This was largely due to lengthy delays since the signing of the peace agreement in disarming

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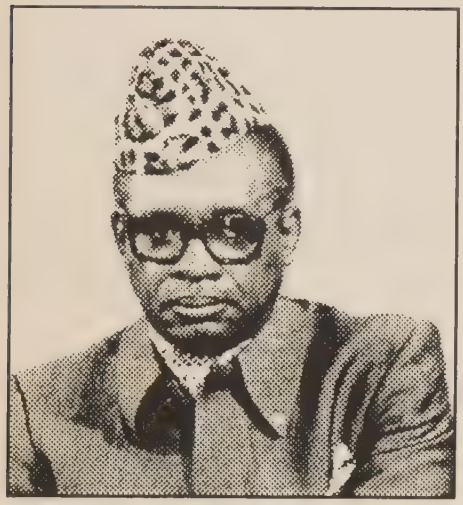
and demobilising troops on both sides. There was general agreement that elections cannot be held until there is just one army in the country and all other forces have been disbanded.

Overall in 1993, many positive decisions were taken in southern Africa. What remains to be be seen is if these decsions can be carried forward and put into practice.

WA

Francophone Africa

THE YEAR IN francophone Africa did not exactly begin under auspicious terms. Hell and brimstone set in early on in Zaire with President Mobutu engaged in an exercise to derail the resolutions of the one and a half year-long national conference which ended at the beginning of December 1992. The opposition coalition "Sacred Union" called for a series of indefinite strikes and mass protests which began on January 15. The widespread protest was instigated in reaction to President Mobutu's refusal to obey the resolutions of the national conference, and for "blocking the functioning of the country's institutions at all levels". Among other measures, he had unsuccessfully ordered the dissolution of the government of transitional Prime Minister Etienne Tshisekedi which emerged from the lengthy national forum, and enjoined the latter to form a more "broad-based" government. A salient feature of the anti-Mobutu movement was the proclamation of Kinshasa, the capital, as "a ghost city".



Mobutu: divide and rule tactics

The transitional legislative High Council of the Republic (HCR), which went so far as to ask the Supreme Court for the dismissal of President Mobutu, even authorised Prime Minister Tshisekedi to call in foreign troops in order to force Mobutu to implement the resolutions of the national conference. In the end, French and Belgian troops came in but this was not to fulfil the wish of the HCR but rather to protect and help evacuate their nationals who became caught up in major crossfire at the end of January between mutinying soldiers and elements of Mobutu's personal guard, the Special Presidential Division (DPS). The soldiers went on an all-out rampage in Kinshasa, pillaging stores and using firearms, especially against the elements of the DPS who were sent out "to restore order", in protest against the introduction of new 5m Zaire bank notes which they could not use in the shops because they had been declared worthless by the Tshisekedi government and shopkeepers would not accept them.

A significant victim in the resulting urban warfare was the newly-arrived French ambassador, Philippe Bernard, who was killed -allegedly by a stray bullet- while watching the clashes from behind the curtains of a window of the embassy. The next major development was the appointment on March 18 by President Mobutu of a new Prime Minister, Faustin Birindwa, who set up a parallel government to that of Etienne Tshisekedi. The appointment of Birindwa, as a second Prime Minister, has locked the country into a political crisis whereby it is still not clear which of the two governments is calling the shots. The latest on the situation is that the two sides, through the mediation of the HCR, have been involved in talks aimed at setting up a single government of national unity.

Another significant development concerns extensive ethnic clashes towards the end of March between inhabitants of the Shaba (formerly Katanga) and Kasai provinces which have created a substantial refugee problem in the country.

In Chad, a relatively successful long-awaited national conference kicked off in the middle of January. It ended within the relatively short time span of two and a half months later with the adoption of important resolutions, including the setting up of a transitional legislative body, the High Council of the Transition (CST), and the election of a new Prime Minister. In spite of the success of the CNS, however, as our report in the issue of December 13-19 shows, the country's journey towards democracy -at least by the close of the year- has not been exactly plain sailing. A few of the key obstacles were the sacking of transitional Prime Minister, Dr Fidel Moungar, and the killing by security forces of the returned dissident Abbas Koti, both of which events took place in October.

Another country which has gone through a turbulent time is Togo. A general strike which was started in mid-November 1992 by trade unionists with the blessing of the Collective of the Democratic Opposition (COD-20) in protest at the wanton killing of pro-democracy activists by the authorities and to back up demands for the organisation of free and fair elections ran well into the new year. Peace attempts at reconciling the opposition and President Gnassingbe Eyadema's group early in the year at Colmar, France, failed miserably with the opposition and international observers laying the blame mainly in the Presidential camp for walking out of the talks beacuse they would not discuss the role of the military. The Colmar fiasco, in a way, paved the way for further talks between the two sides which were held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in preparation for legislative and Presidential elections initially scheduled to take place in June and July.

Next to the massive exodus of Togolese citizens (over 300 000) into neighbouring countries due to wanton attacks orchestrated by the army, including an attempt on opposition leader Gilchrist Olympio in May, the main highlight of the year is that President Eyadema got reelected in August in elections snubbed by international observers and largely boycotted by the opposition. So far as the legislative polls are concerned, they have not yet taken place because of the insistence by the opposition on proper organisation, and it is not expected that they will be held until well into the new year.

Lissouba: clashed with the opposition

Another country that witnessed major political convulsions has been Congo where the opposition and the government were locked in in an interminabale dispute about results of a second round of legislative elections held in June. In spite of the long-drawn dispute being eventually settled through the holding of another second round in October which was negotiated thanks to the mediation of Gabon's President Omar Bongo, relations between the two sides remained strained. Early in November government troops clashed violently with armed elements of the opposition, especially of Bernard Kolelas' Movement for Democracy and Integral Development (MCDDI) in some districts of Brazzaville, the capital. The bloodiest clashes in the country's recent history which lasted a few days resulted in at least 40 being killed.

Other countries where substantial social and political disruption has occured include Senegal where the vice-president of the Supreme Court was killed in connection with Presidential election results by attackers allegedly belonging to the opposition, and

trade unions have been engaged in a a series of repeated salary-related industrial actions; Cameroon where John Fru Ndi's main opposition has continued to remonstrate over the results of Presidential elections held in October last year in which President Biya narrowly clinched a victory. Countries which witnessed political turmoil but to a lesser degree include Cote d'Ivoire where an intense battle of succession to the recently deceased President Houphouet Boigny between Prime Minister Alassane Ouattara and the President of the National Assembly, Konan Bedie, has 'happily' not degenerated into a Liberia type situation, Burkina Faso and Mauritania. Violence of limited extent has also been witnessed in countries where Presidential and legislative elections have been held such as the Central African Republic, Gabon, Guinea, Senegal and Equatorial Guinea. On the credit side, the Tuareg problem in Mali was resolved with an accord which makes provision for the reintegration of Algeria-based refugees. In the same vein, a truce which appears to be permanent was reached between the government and the southern Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC). In Niger, the situation still remains somewhat precarious between the government and some of the Tuareg movements although notable efforts have been made towards the resolution of the protracted conflict.

Themon Djaksam

ZAIRE

Mobutu's dirty tactics

The political crisis which surfaced since the National Conference still persists

THE POLITICAL CRISIS in Zaire today is primarily due to the refusal of President Mobutu Sese Seko to relinquish absolute power and to accept democratic change. Politically, Zaire is now divided into two antagonistic camps: the forces of the status quo aligned with President Mobutu and the democratic forces led by Prime Minister Etienne Tshisekedi, head of the Transitional Government.

Mobutu has violated the Comprehensive Political Compromise according to which power was to be shared between him and the democratic opposition during the transition, together with the Transitional Act (or provisional constitution) which is based on the compromise. Both documents were adopted by the Sovereign National Conference in August 1992. The latter was a political reform and constitutional convention of over 2,800 delegates from all walks of life that met between August 7 1991 and December 6 1992. I was greatly privileged to be one of the approximately 100 delegates-at-large coopted by the Conference to participate fully in its deliberations.

To govern the country during a two-year transitional period, the Conference established a parliamentary system of government with separation of powers between four institutions: a President "who reigns but does not govern;" a High Council of the Republic with all legislative powers as the provisional parliament; a Transitional Government with all executive powers headed by a Prime Minister elected by the National Conference; and the Courts of Law. None of these institutions is supposed to interfere with or impede the functioning of the others. Such obstruction is considered treasonable and therefore an impeachable offence, one for which an official can be removed from office by a two-thirds majority vote in the High Council.

Fearing an erosion of his powers and an end to his unlimited access to state coffers at the central bank,, President Mobutu moved to destabilise the newly installed Transitional Government of Prime Minister Tshisekedi, first by militarily occupying in September 1992 the central bank and the general tax office -- both important sources of cash for him -- and then by illegally dismissing Tshisekedi's ministers and locking them out of their offices in December. In March of this year, he named an illegal government with Faustin Birindwa as prime minister. This action was illegal and unconstitutional. Under the Transitional Act, which was declared by Zaire's Supreme Court on January 8 1993 to be the only legally binding constitution for Zaire today, Mobutu is a ceremonial Head of State with no executive powers. Both the US brokered Political Compromise, to which he subscribed in July 1992, and the Transitional Act, stipulated that the Prime Minister of the Transitional Government be elected by the National Conference.

In view of all this, any new talks between the democratic opposition and Mobutu are a waste of time. By taking part in such talks, as they have done repeatedly, the democratic forces of the opposition are responding to the growing misery of the population in the face of Mobutu's reign of terror on the one hand, and to external pressures by the United States and other powers, on the other. As the Catholic Bishops of Zaire have stated in their declaration of September 6 1993, Mobutu is using state terrorism, ethnic cleansing (particularly in Shaba and North Kivu provinces) and economic sabotage as means of destabilising the country and maintaining full control of the state apparatus. As for Mobutu and his followers, their willingness to take part in these talks is evidence of their desire to regain credibility and respectability in the eyes of the international community. Thus, by backing virtually endless negotiations, Zaire's Western partners and the United Nations are objectively helping Mobutu to find an easy way out of a crisis that he had himself created in a manner that would allow him to rehabilitate himself internationally while retaining effective power in Zaire. Given Mobutu's record of not honouring agreements, there is no guarantee that what comes out of any negotiations will be respected by him if it diminishes his hold on power.

The best guarantee for the establishment of the rule of law and for a successful transition to democracy in Zaire is for all internal parties to the conflict as well as the international community, to respect the legal and institutional framework of the transition as adopted by Zaire's Sovereign National Conference. The political impasse in Zaire today is due to the attempt by one individual to destroy that framework and thus obstruct the transition to democracy. An entire nation of 40 million people is being held hostage by one man. This should not be allowed to continue.

The conclusion to be drawn from the Zairian experience is that rather than seeking compromise agreements that dictators will never honour, a Zairian-type situation requires that a dictator be pressured into stepping down. This is what happened in the Philippines with Ferdinand Marcos and in Haiti with Jean-Claude Duvalier. Since internal pressure is inadequate to achieve this aim, external pressure is required to avoid further disintegration into absolute chaos. This is why it is incumbent on those external forces responsible for the very existence and survival of the Mobutu regime to help the Zairian people overthrow him. There cannot be compromise with a dictator.

What, then, should the international community do to help the democratic forces of Zaire achieve their aim of a peaceful transition to multiparty democracy?

The international community should strongly support the legal and institutional framework of the transition to democracy as defined by the National Conference, and recognise the Transitional Government of Prime Minister Tshisekedi as the only legitimate government in Zaire today. It should actively seek to isolate the Mobutu dictatorship and to impose punitive sanctions on Mobutu and all those helping him to obstruct the democratisation process. Finally, all efforts should be made to assist the Transitional Government of Zaire find the ways and means with which to implement the decisions of the National Conference with respect to the restructuring of the armed forces, administrative reform, economic reconstruction, and the preparation and holding of free and fair elections.

Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja

OPINION

Why the CFA franc must go

By Sanou Mbaye

FOURTHEEN OF THE former West African French colonies use the CFA franc, whose exchange rate is pegged to the French franc, as a common currency. The CFA franc was created, in its initial form, in the 19th century to help France shape and control the economies of her colonies. The scheme was quite useful to France, which it helped to resist the tremors of the economic crises of the 1930s; it was also extremely welcomed by General de Gaulle when he sought means to finance his resistance and achieved it with the gold production of the African colonies.

After independence, some of these colonies chose to conduct independent monetary and exchange rate policies and left the system. These were: Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Madagascar and Mauritania. It was quite the opposite for most of the francophone African countries (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Togo). They surrendered the management of their foreign exchange reserves to the French treasury in exchange for the convertibility of the CFA franc. This status of convertibility has greatly benefited the economic players. But who stands to benefit most?

First we have the banks. The foreign-owned banks provide short term facilities, making huge profits in financing essential imports like food and petroleum products. The high level of interest rates and commissions they charge in any current banking operations would be a deterrent for the African savers if they were allowed to choose.

The local banks try their best to finance medium and long term investments, which are instrumental to any development process. Unfortunately for them, their main clients are the states and the para-statals. And these are almost all bankrupt. Consequently, the local entrepreneurs are starved of medium and long term financing.

A second range of beneficiaries are the private sector operators dominated by French firms settled in Africa since colonial times. They are refinanced by the Central Bank in which France exercises an absolute dominance thanks to the veto that the status bestowed on it. It enjoys a free flow of cheap labour and raw materials and a protected market for its manufactured products.

Another category of beneficiaries are the members of the elite who trade with their people and rush to transfer the proceeds abroad, mainly to France.

But the main beneficiary of all is still France. It provides aid and in exchange enjoys a vast market for its products, a steady supply of cheap raw materials, the repatriation of the lion's share of the local savings, an unchallenged political influence, a strategic military presence and the certainty that it can rely on its African allies on the international stage, notably in the UN.

However, such a scheme has its economic price. The high level of the CFA franc exchange rate has rendered francophone Africa's exports uncompetitive. Anyway, the bulk of the manufactured products were not meant for export, but destined for the domestic markets. As a result, the structural adjustment programmes they tried to implement through the 1980s were flawed in many ways. The limited scope of their objectives, i.e. curbing budget deficit without tackling the monetary and exchange rate imbalances, did more harm than anything else. Indeed inflation is more or less under control but interest rates are extremely high, thwarting any prospect of growth. Unemployment is skyrocketing. Promoting privatisation without existing capital markets is tantamount to handing over our most valuable assets to powerful French and foreign groups in the most unfavourable conditions. These groups are now speculating in the shadows for the devaluation of the CFA franc, so they can make their acquisitions at even lower prices.

Now all the talk is of devaluation. But devaluation may be helpful if it boosts exports and improves the trade balance. France has devalued 14 times since the end of the Second World War. The volume of its foreign trade indicates the advantages, but if the French economy benefited from the depreciation of its currency, it was mainly due to the fact that it had a strong industrial base, orders from its European partners, a dynamic private sector capable of delivering the increased demand for goods and services, a stable political regime, and finally an environment conducive to business expansion.

The francophone countries do not have these advantages. Their industrial bases are shaky. Intra African trade is skeletal. The political regimes are unstable and unpopular and most of them owe their survival to French aid. In addition, primary goods, whose prices will not be affected at all by any devaluation, still make up the bulk of their exports whereas the small volume of their industrial outputs are uncompetitive and subject, anyway, to discrimination and quotas in the world markets. Within that context, the benefit of a devaluation will be minimal. On the other hand it will undoubtedly lead to increased money supply, inflation, and import price rises. Unemployment, whose level has already reached unbearable proportions with all the controls in spending and massive lay-offs in the private and public sectors under previous adjustment programmes, will keep rising.

Devaluation will not affect either the servicing of foreign debts which absorbs a substantial portion of Africa's export earnings. The anticipated deterioration of the economic situation could even worsen the situation.

As an alternative to devaluation, the francophone countries would be better off severing the links between France and the CFA franc in order to establish a central bank independent of France with full powers to issue a separate currency and hold the mandatory reserves of the commercial banks. They can achieve such a goal with any chance of success only in integrating their economies with those of Nigeria and Ghana within the framework of the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas) which represents a market of 160 million people.

Senegal is a striking example of all the problems of structural maladjustment. The country undertook a short-term emergency stabilisation programme in 1979, a financial adjustment programme (1985-1992) and medium and long-term adjustment programmes for the same period. But because of the constraint of the official exchange rate of 1FF to 50CFA which has remained unchanged since 1948, the scope of the various economic programmes was limited to budget deficit reduction. Imports and public investments have been

reduced but the budget deficit, which was estimated at over five per cent of GDP in 1989-90, has not been brought under control. Inflation rate is low but interest rates stay high. The economic rate of growth was 2.9 per cent in real terms in 1986-1990 instead of the annual rate of 3.5 per cent projected in the medium and long term adjustment programme. Compared to a population growth rate estimated at three per cent, the level of economic growth did not improve GDP per capita.

The Government also undertook a reform of the banking system. As a result, the ailing national banks have been eliminated. The remaining banks are all foreign-owned: Credit Lyonnais, BICIS (Banque Nationale de Paris), Societe Generale, Citibank, BIAO.

The economic woes of the francophone countries also reverberate in the economies of their neighbours, mainly Nigeria and Ghana. Nigeria, for example, devalued heavily the naira over a period of five years. This gives a competitive edge to Nigerian manufactured products but provokes at the same time loss of revenue with fuel being smuggled into the neighbouring francophone countries where fuel prices are much higher due to the differential of exchange rates.

As an alternative to devaluation, the francophone countries would be better off severing the links between France and the CFA franc in order to establish a central bank independent of France with full powers to issue a separate currency and hold the mandatory reserves of the commercial banks. They can achieve such a goal with any chance of success only in integrating their economies with those of Nigeria and Ghana within the framework of the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas) which represents a market of 160 million people.

• Sanou Mbaye is a Finance Officer at the London Office of the African Development Bank

INQUIRY

A damning report (2)

A continuation of the White Paper on the second volume of the Beccles Davies Commission report on the assets of former public officials in Sierra Leone

MR PHILIPSON H. KAMARA, former Minister of Transport & Communication:

The White Paper noted from the evidence adduced by the Commission that within the period under investigation, Mr Philipson Kamara, a former minister in the Momoh government, acquired the following assets:

- House and provision shop at No 28C Syke Street, Freetown, purchased in July 1990
- House at No 16 James Street, Freetown, purchased in August 1989
- Le170,000 fully paid-up shares in Reliance Trust Corporation acquired in January 1991
- 5KVA Lister generator described as 'used' and valued at Le250,000 acquired in January 1991
- Houses at 6 and 6A Kaloko Street, Makeni, acquired in January 1991 for Le2,150,000
- House at 24A Savage Street, Freetown, acquired in April 1991 for £26,000 sterling i.e. Le10,019,600
- Mercedes Benz Jeep 300s acquired in September 1991 at Le19,053,500.

The White Paper further noted the report by the Commission that according to Mr Kamara's evidence, his fortunes took an upward trend in 1990 as a result of his investments in previous years, notably the house at 28C Syke Street, income from the shop at the same address and his farm at Bafodia. He asserted he had "other sources", but when pressed by the Commission for a disclosure of the "other sources", he quibbled and eventually settled on the Syke Street and Bafodia sources. When the incomes of these sources were totalled, the White Paper observed, the amount received by Mr Kamara was Le4,700,000. The White Paper further observed: "According to the Commission's Report, in 1991 alone, Mr Kamara spent a total of Le33,079,200. The total deposits into his bank accounts, between 1986 and 1992, a period of virtually seven years, amounted to Le18,690,789.44, which included his salaries. Mr Kamara's expenditure in 1991 far exceeded (was almost twice) what went into his account in nearly seven years. We therefore do not believe his evidence on his alleged sources of income from investments which enabled him to acquire all that he had".

Noting that because of time constraint, the Commission was unable to investigate the following cheque payments into Mr Kamara's account, the White Paper directed that the payments be jointly investigated by the Auditor-General and the Police and a report thereon be submitted to the NPRC by the end of November.

The cheque payments included the following:

11th July 1988
Sierra Leone Commercial Bank (SLCB) cheque No SST/SB 0061922 paid by Sierra Fishing Co. Ltd, Le150,000

21st June 1990
International Bank for Trade & Industry (IBTI) draft No BD/008828 paid by Mrs Hutton Mills, Le900,000

28th June 1990
IBTI draft No BD-008828 paid by Mrs Hutton Mills, Le500,000

30th August 1990
IBTI draft No BD/011851 paid by Mrs Hutton Mills, Le644,000

12th January 1991
SLCB cheque No SST/EL 400497 paid by Ben Kanu Co Ltd, Le1,800,000

13th February 1991
IBTI cheque No 225028 paid by S.L. National Petroleum Co, Le1,100,000

28th May 1991
Standard Chartered Bank cheque No 095882 issued by Guardship for Le2,005,000 converted to bank draft (No. 105210) for Le2,000,000.

The White Paper also ordered the forfeiture of the following assets of Mr Kamara to the state:

(i) House and land at 24A Savage Street, Freetown
(ii) Houses at 6 and 6A Kaloko Street, Makeni
(iii) House at 16 James Street, Freetown
(iv) Massey Fergusson 365 tractor registration No NB 3106 with plough and harrow
(v) Le170,000 fully paid-up shares in Reliance Trust Corporation
(iv) Mercedes Benz 300

and that he pays compensation to the State in the sum of Le50m.

It also directed that Mr Philipson Kamara be stripped of any titles, honours and awards bestowed on him by the state and be banned for life from holding any public office, and from doing any business with government, all government agencies and parastatals on his own behalf, or in association with other business, person or persons.

Dr A.K. Turay, former Minister of State, Presidential Affairs:

The White Paper noted that inspite of several radio announcements and government gazette notices inviting Dr A.K. Turay to the Commission and the an-

nouncement of his name aloud several times by the Secretary of the Commission, on commencement of the hearing, there was no response from him. He was reputed to be outside Sierra Leone.

The White Paper noted that the Commission originally had no information about Dr Turay's property and that it was in the course of the preparation of its report that the police at Makeni furnished the Commission with the undermentioned information:-

Assets

(i) Property formerly owned by Messrs T. Choithram and Sons (since demolished) along Station Road, Makeni

(ii) Six-bedroomed house at 46B Rogbanneh Road, Makeni

(iii) Incomplete 11-bedroom building (to wall height) at Mallage

(iv) Store at Masongbo village (content unknown)

(v) Building materials and other personal property (allegedly in the custody of Messrs Wusu Koroma and M.C. Conteh of 28, Sylvanus Street and Magburaka Road, Makeni respectively).

The White Paper noted that the Commission was not able to ascertain the year of acquisition, price and estimated values of these properties because of time constraint.

Bank Accounts

The White Paper noted the Commission's report that from July 1986 to April 1992 (the period that Turay was in political office in charge of "Presidential Affairs" in Momoh's government) his total emoluments amounted to Le415,839.82. But the total amounts paid into his Barclays Bank account during this period amounted to Le8,8,44,638.15, leaving a resultant balance after deduction of his personal emoluments, of Le7,428,799.33.

Noting that Turay was in control of pecuniary resources disproportionate to his past official emoluments and that he maintained a standard of living incommensurate with his past official emoluments, the White Paper ordered that he forfeits the following assets to the state:

(i) Property formerly owned by Messrs T. Choithram and Sons along Station Road, Makeni

(ii) Six-bedroomed house at 46B Rogbanneh Road, Makeni

(iii) Incomplete 11-bedroomed building at Mallage, Makeni

(iv) 100-acre palm plantation at Masongbo village

(v) Store at Masongbo village (content unknown)

(vi) Building materials and other personal property (allegedly in the custody of Messrs Wusu Koroma and M.C. Conteh of 28 Sylvanus Street, and Magburaka Road, respectively)

and that he pays Le150m compensation to the state.

If further directed that the Secretary of State for Lands, Housing and the Environment in close liaison with the Administrator and Registrar-General, the Commission of Income Tax and Inspector-General of Police launch an investigation with a view to identifying other assets belonging to Turay which should be forfeited to the state.

It also directed that Turay be stripped of all national honours and awards and be banned for life from holding any public office, and from doing business with government, all government agencies and parastatals on his own behalf, or in a association with any other person, persons or business.

Professor Moses Dumbuya, former Minister of Education, Cultural Affairs and Sports in the Momoh government:

The White Paper also noted the Commission's view that since the relationship between the government of Sierra Leone and the government of China was bilateral, "it was difficult to see how the government of China could have included in a gift to the government of Sierra Leone, a personal gift meant for Professor Dumbuya. We do not believe that was what happened".

The White Paper accepted the Commission's view that in allocating to himself five machines donated to the government, Dr Dumbuya abused his office and is thereby liable to return the five sewing machines to the government.

The White Paper noted the following property acquired by Professor M.B. Dumbuya during the period under investigation:

(i) Unfinished structure at Spur Loop, Wilberforce, Freetown

(ii) Unfinished house at Lungi

However, noting the Commission's observation that ("notwithstanding our finding that Professor Dumbuya was in possession of financial resources incommensurate with his past official emoluments, we are unable to make any pronouncement as to whether he came by such financial resources lawfully i.e. Le7,661,226.64 minus his personal emoluments for the period June 1986 to April 1992 amounting to Le439,644.89"), the White Paper directed that Professor Dumbuya should, within seven days from the publication of the White Paper, show adequate proof that he lawfully acquired the sum of Le7,221,621.75 or forfeit it to the state.

It further noted the Commission's report that "during Dumbuya's tenure of office as Minister, the Chinese government had donated certain sporting and school equipment including sewing machines to the government of Sierra Leone through the Ministry of Education, Cultural Affairs and Sports. Professor Dumbuya took delivery of the items and claimed that five sewing machines were allocated to him personally".

It also noted the Commission's view that since the relationship between the government of Sierra Leone and the government of China was bilateral, "it was difficult to see how the government of China could have included in a gift to the government of Sierra Leone, a personal gift meant for Professor Dumbuya. We do not believe that was what happened".

The White Paper accepted the Commission's view that in allocating to himself five machines donated to the government, Dr Dumbuya abused his office and is thereby liable to return the five sewing machines to the government.

It therefore directed that Professor Dumbuya:

(i) Replaces the five sewing machines to the government immediately

(ii) He forfeits:

a) the unfinished structure at Spur Loop, Wilberforce

b) the unfinished house at Lungi

and that he pays Le15m compensation to the State. He is also stripped of all national titles, honours and awards and banned for life from holding any public office and from doing any business with government, government agencies and parastatals on his own behalf or in association with other business, persons or persons.

Dr Wiltshire S.B. Johnson, former Minister of Health:

The White Paper noted that within the period under review, Dr Johnson acquired the following assets:

(i)Wilbar Agricultural Project at Polongue, off Waterloo, acquired between 1979 and 1989

(ii) Land off Pipe Line, Wilberforce, measuring 0.5623 acre acquired in December 1989

(iii) Land off Pipe Line, Wilberforce, measuring 0.2162 acre acquired in January 1990

(iv) State land at Hill Station, measuring 0.5366 acre with incomplete building

(v) Volvo saloon car bought for £13,000

(iv) Mazda pick-up van bought for Le400,000.

The White Paper noted the Commission's report that Dr Johnson, in a written statement tendered in evidence, claimed that the Wilbar Agricultural Project was capable of yielding up to Le3,240,000 annually; that in this regard, the project's bank statements for the period 18th March 1989 (when the account No 340218 was opened at the Sierra Leone Commercial Bank) up to and including December 1991 when no further deposits were made into the account), amounted to Le5,526,027. Dr Johnson's claim that his agricultural project yielded up to Le3,240,000 yearly, it noted, cannot therefore be sustained.

The White Paper further noted the Commission's observation that "notwithstanding our finding that Dr Johnson was in possession of financial resources not commensurate with his past official emoluments, we are unable to make any pronouncements as to whether he came by such financial resources lawfully (i.e. Le11,513,307.88 minus his official emoluments for the period June 1986 to April 1992 amounting to Le436,694.89, leaving a resulting amount of Le11,073,712.99), we were unable to put this to him on account of the inadequacy of hearing time at our disposal." The White Paper directed that the above matter be the subject of thorough investigation by the Income Tax Department to ascertain whether the right quantum of taxes were paid by Dr Johnson on the amount of Le11,073,712.00.

Noting that a donation of $5000 was made by the Association of International Economic Strategy of Belgium for which an account was opened in Bank Bruxelles, Lambert, which now stands at Bf 259,766 inclusive of interest, the White Paper directed that the Secretary of State, Health, looks into the matter and advises the NPRC on what use to make of this fund.

In the meantime, the White Paper ordered that the period under acquired by Johnson within the period under review be forfeited to the state:

(i) Land off Pipe Line, Wilberforce, measuring 0.5623 acres
(ii) Land off Pipe Line, Wilberforce, measuring 0.2162 acres
(iii) State land at Hill Station with incomplete building
(iv) Volvo saloon car

and that he pays Le30m compensation to the state.

In addition, Dr Johnson will be stripped of all national titles, honours and awards and is banned from holding any public office and from doing any business with government, all government agencies and parastatals on his own behalf or in association with any other person, persons or business.

- To be continued

CIVIL WAR

An uncertain future

Plots and uncertainties hang over Liberia, as Ben Asante reports from Monrovia

AS THE YEAR comes to an end, Liberia's political future remains as uncertain as it was at the start of the year when rebel NPFL bombs and rockets rained on the overcrowded capital of Monrovia, and against the Ecomog peace-keepers.

There is a desperate race for time. President Sawyer despatched his Foreign Minister, Baccus Matthews, to New York and Washington and the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Dr James Jonah, and the OAU Special Envoy for Liberia, former President Canaan Banana, arrived to assess the critical situation of "no war, no peace" against the continuous high cost of Ecowas and the international community's involvement in ending the civil war.

According to the Cotonou Accord of July 25, the country by this time ought to be half way into preparations for elections in March 1994 under a new transitional government embracing the armed Ulimo and NPFL factions and the coalition of political parties and interest groups which formed the Interim Government led by Dr Sawyer.

But this has not taken place. The major setback to attempts to restore full security across the country has been the long delay in the disarming of Taylor's NPFL fighters and Ulimo.

Additional peace-keeping troops from East Africa - Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe - sponsored by the UN, whose task is to disarm the NPFL, were due to arrive in December. Even then the NPFL leadership has been trying hard, using all sorts of excuses, to avoid disarming when pressured by both IGNU and the UN to begin handing over their weapons to Ecomog troops already on the ground to allow the political process to take off.

In the five months since the Peace Accord, the only positive development has been a meeting inside Liberia involving all parties, the first of its kind since 1991. The NPFL had repeatedly refused invitations to meet in the capital, Monrovia.

Sawyer: IGNU President

Though the talks in Monrovia have been characterised by arguments and insults

and have been of little substance, some observers see them as a necessary therapy, enabling all sides, after a bitter civil war, to get everything off their chests. "It is necessary to get over the psychological barrier, hatred and suspicion by saying it all to each other's face," said an observer to the talks, adding: "After all, they will get to the real issues of settling down for peace."

Despite this optimism, some of the joint positions advanced by the armed factions have been viewed as less than altruistic. The NPFL, for example, has been seen as either mischievous or having a hidden agenda by proposing to disarm to itself or to the small number (a mere 200) of unarmed UN military observers (UNOMIL).

A further offer of disarming only to soldiers of the Ghanaian Ecomog contingent has been seen as an attempt to divide the multi-national force which is certain to be opposed by the field commander, who alone decides what troops under his command do.

While the talks in Monrovia go on against the backdrop of two years of large-scale international involvement of humanitarian relief and UN agencies to provide needed help to thousands of ordinary Liberians at a time when Ecomog continues to provide security to liberated areas, rumours and reports of plots by armed factions permeate the air.

Intelligence sources recently revealed that there has been active cooperation between some elements of Ulimo and their once bitter foe, the NPFL, and there are alleged plots to overthrow the Interim Government if it keeps on insisting on disarmament.

Details of the plot, codenamed "Spider Web", are alleged to include a massive influx of agitators into Monrovia from NPFL-controlled areas, seizure of key ministry buildings and violence against key figures of IGNU.

But in early December, two separate delegations, one led by Mr John T. Richardson, Mr Taylor's staunchest lieutenant, and the other headed by retired NPFL General Isaac Musa, a member of the incoming Liberia National Transitional Government (LNTG), arrived in Monrovia for peace talks and the latter significantly for the seating of the new transitional government.

Two weeks of talks among the parties by themselves at Hotel Africa outside Monrovia produced no positive results, but was marked by heated exchanges of insults, personal attacks, accusations and counter-accusations.

The NPFL has objected to the participation in the talks by outside mediators - Ecowas, Ecomog, OAU and the UN - all of whom are represented on the ground in Monrovia. Ambassador Trevor Gordon-Somers, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative, made a brief intervention in the talks to correct the NPFL's misrepresentation of the role of the UN, but he came under bitter attacks by both the leader of the NPFL delegation, Mr Richardson, and Taylor himself in a radio interview.

Taylor: NPFL leader

The NPFL, joined by Ulimo, tried to ride roughshod over IGNU in the talks by attempting to put aside the pre-conditions of disarmament and at the same time insisting on an immediate date for the transfer of power to the transitional government.

The demands raised fears both inside and outside the talks of the frightening possibility of Ulimo and the NPFL refusing to disarm once the new government was installed.

It took the public intervention of the Ecomog Chief of Staff, Brig-Gen Femi J.O. Williams, to allay fears when he reminded parties to the talks that conditions for the installation of the new government as laid down in the Cotonou Accord would have to be met, including disarmament before anything.

Some observers see the alleged plot as difficult to carry out, given the heavy presence of Ecomog troops on the ground. Nevertheless the Interim Government took the unusual step of informing NPFL representatives in Monrovia and advising them to desist.

The Ecomog High Command, though acknowledging threats, continues to assure the public that all was under control as it eagerly awaits the beefing up of its strength by troops from East Africa.

As the year ends, the pressure to resolve the Liberian crisis or prevent it sliding back increases. The UN Security Council is due to make a review of the first six months of its involvement under UNOMIL following the fact-finding mission by Under-Secretary James Jonah. According to Ambassador Gordon-Somers, further Security Council action would depend on progress on the ground. Given the numerous commitments of the UN it all looks problematic.

The budget for UNOMIL and other UN involvement outside the humanitarian operations alone is some $43m. The Liberian Trust Fund launched by the UN Secretary-General to which the American government and the UK contributed $30m and $1m respectively, is still heavily under-funded. The Trust Fund is only to finance the new troops.

The heavy burden of peace-keeping in Liberia, which is running into its fourth year, remains on the West African states in Ecomog and, unless the armed groups give in to the implementation of the peace accord, they stand the risk of prolonging the agony of the majority of Liberians.

Clearly, the peace process and the international efforts to steer the way to elections are at the crossroads. It is not clear whether the death of President Boigny in neighbouring Cote d'Ivoire will affect Taylor's future actions one way or the other. WA

REPUBLIC OF GHANA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
INVITATION FOR PREQUALIFICATION OF CONTRACTORS

1 The Government of Ghana has received a credit from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, hereinafter referred to as the International Development Agency (IDA) in various currencies towards the cost of construction and Rehabilitation of Physical Facilities in Tertiary Institutions in Ghana

2 The Ministry of Education, Projects Management Unit (PMU, hereinafter "the employer") intends to prequalify contractors for the following works under this project:

- ***Contract 1*** Construction and Rehabilitation Works
  University of Ghana, Legon
- ***Contract 2*** Construction and Rehabilitation Works
  University of Ghana, Legon
- ***Contract 3*** Rehabilitation Works
  University of Ghana Medical School, Korle Bu
  Rehabilitation Works Accra Polytechnic, Accra
- ***Contract 4*** Rehabilitation Works
  University College of Education, Winneba
- ***Contract 5*** Rehabilitation Works
  Ho Polytechnic, Ho
- ***Contract 6*** Construction and Rehabilitation Works
  University of Science and Technology, Kumasi
- ***Contract 7*** Construction and Rehabilitation Works
  University of Science and Technology, Kumasi
- ***Contract 8*** Construction and Rehabilitation Works
  University of Science and Technology, Kumasi
- ***Contract 9*** Construction and Rehabilitation Works
  Kumasi Polytechnic, Kumasi
- ***Contract 10*** Construction and Rehabilitation Works
  University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast
- ***Contract 11*** Rehabilitation Works
  Cape Coast Polytechnic, Cape Coast
- ***Contract 12*** Rehabilation Works
  Takoradi Polytechnic, Takoradi

4 Prequalification is open to only firms and Joint Ventures from World Bank member countries. Applications may be made for prequalification for one or more of the above contracts. All goods and ancillary services are to be supplied from member countries of the World Bank

5 Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information and inspect the prequalification documents at the office of:

The Procurement Office (Room LH6)
Projects Management Unit
Ministry of Education
P.O. Box M.28
Accra, Ghana

Location:

Ghana Literacy House
(Near Sankara Circle)
Off Independence Avenue Accra
☎ (233-21) 220462, 223054

6 A complete set of Prequalification documents may be obtained by any interested eligible Bidder upon submission of a written application and a non-refundable fee of one hundred US Dollars (US $100.00) or (US $150.00 including courier services) from the Ministry of Education, Projects Management Unit, Accra. The request must clearly state "Request for Prequalification Documents for Construction and Rehabilitation of Physical Facilities in Tertiary Institutions in Ghana, Zones 1 2 & 3".

7 Bids must be delivered at the above address on or before 10.00 a.m (local time) on February 15, 1994 and clearly marked "Application for Prequalification, Zones 1 2 & 3".

TO ALL OUR READERS AND ADVERTISERS

WEST AFRICA

Specials Schedule for 1994

1. January 10	**Ghana.**
2. February 28	**Africa Cup of Nations.**
3. March 28	**Banking and Finance.**
4. May 9	**ADB.**
5. May 30	**World Cup.**
6. June 20	**UK and West Africa.**
7. July 11	**Ecowas/West Africa Trade.**
8. August 15	**Mining in Ghana.**
9. September 26	**Nigeria.**
10. October 24	**Tourism in West Africa.**
11. November 21	**Africa and Asia.**
12. December 5	**Information Technology in Africa.**

Gambia Ports Authority

The Government of The Gambia has applied for a loan from African Development Fund towards the cost of Banjul Port Project II, and intends to use part of this loan for expanding the port facilities in Banjul. Procurement will be subject to the terms and conditions of the lending agency.

The project, supervised by Gambia Port Authority, under the Ministry of Works and Communication, The Gambia, will comprise:

- Construction of an expansion of the existing jetty and of three dolphins for ro-ro ships. The expansion (25.5m wide and 177m long) as well as the dolphins shall be supported on 48m long tubular steel piles.
- Maintenance dredging, 20,000 - 40,000 m3.
- Supply and installation of water, power lines etc to the jetty expansion.

Gambia Ports Authority wishes to prequalify civil engineering contractors with experience in pile driving and in situ concrete works, for this project.

The minimum requirement for prequalification will be an average annual turnover of US$ 30 million within the last five years.

The prequalification period is until February 25, 1994.

Interested contractors and joint ventures of contractors from member countries of the African Development Bank and state participants of the African Development Fund may obtain additional information regarding the project and the requirements for prequalification from the offices of:

Portconsult, Osterbrogade 156, DK-2100 Copenhagen, Denmark; Tel +45 35 26 35 00, Fax +45 35 26 27 44, Telex 15588 poco dk.

NIGERIA

Soldiers to uphold image

Head of State Sani Abacha has warned soldiers not to put the corporate image of the army in jeopardy by engaging in corrupt practices. He delivered the warning while speaking to a cream of army officers at the beginning of a three-day Chief of Army Staff yearly conference which was held in Lagos from December 13-15.

General Abacha said that to be worthy of being called professionals "officers of the army must be prepared to lead in our public life. For soldiers to allow ourselves to be corrupted by the larger society is to put our corporate dignity in jeopardy."

Mindful of the corrupt tendencies to which officers who served previously in government were exposed, General Abacha said that his regime's determination to stem the incidence of corruption had informed its determiniation to issue a code of ethics to guide the 30 state administrators who were sworn in two weeks ago. He declared: "On our part, we shall continue to live by example and this is what I expect from all of you."

The Head of State noted that "from the actions we have taken so far, there is reason to believe that this administration is unreservedly committed to the corporate unity of Nigeria based on fair-minded principles of equal opportunities for all, social justice, liberty and well-being of its citizens."

AIDS scare

About 15,000 Nigerians who have developed full-blown AIDS may die of the disease during 1994. Dr T.M. Akerele of the United Nations Information Service in Lagos said at a symposium to mark this year's World AIDS Day that the fast rate of the spread of the disease required urgent and concerted efforts from non-governmental organisations to combat it.

Speaking on The Role of NGOs on Networking on the Prevention and Control of AIDS, he said that a recent joint survey by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the National AIDS Control showed that the number of those infected by the HIV virus which leads to AIDS could rise to 625,000 before the end of 1994.

In another paper on The Global AIDS Challenge, Dr G. M. R. Manube, a WHO scientific officer on epidemeology, said that about 552,000 Nigerian children would have been infected by the deadly disease by 1995. He said that 10 million children born of AIDS -infected parents in the world would become orphans by the year 2000, adding that 500,000 babies had been infected with the HIV virus worldwide.

In a third paper titled Women and Aids, Professor Ibironke Akinsete of the Haematology and Blood Transmission Unit of the University of Lagos explained that women were generally more exposed to the HIV virus. She added that it was easier for men to pass the virus to women because the African society seemed to approve of male promiscuity.

Bank officials held

The manager of a Lagos branch of Owena Bank and his accountant who is a woman have been arrested in connection with the sum of N6 million discovered to be missing from the bank's vault. The bank's supervisor and two security men cannot be located and are wanted by the police.

Police sources said the manager had left the vault keys with the accountant who in turn handed them over to the supervisor before the close of work over a weekend. Mr Isaac Akinmoyede, the police public relations officer in Lagos, told journaalists that efforts were being made to arrest the fleeing supervisor and security men. He appealed to bank managers to always screen private security officials carefully before engaging their services.

Officer reinstated

The Federal Court of Appeal sitting in Lagos has reinstated Flight-Lieutenant Otu Edet of the Air Force who was compulsorily retired from service four years ago. It held that Edet had not been retired in accordance with the rules of the service, thereby overruling the lower court.

Court records state that Edet was compulsorily retired on October 20 1989 because "of a series of acts of his which had become a source of embarrassment to the Nigerian Air Force." Edet, however, challenged his retirement on the grounds that he was retired by the Chief of Air Staff rather than the Air Council, and without a fair hearing.

In his lead judgement, Mr Justice Ignatius Pats-Acholonu held that it would be invidious of him to infer that because a letter of dismissal was signed by an officer who described himself as acting on behalf of the Chief of Air Staff, the Air Council was privy to the whole episode. He continued: "Furthermore, the Chief of Air Staff cannot pretend to arrogate to himself the powers that are statutorily vested in the Air Council unless he can show that he had the needed authority to act."

Justice Pats-Acholonu also observed that rather than be called upon to retire or resign as stipulated in the service laws, Edet was just compulsorily retired. He therefore disagreed with the lower court judge's opinion that "where a commissioned officer is dismissed or retired or forced to resign, he could seek an interview with the Chief of Air Staff or as a last resort, with the Minister of Defence in order to ask that his case be reviewed."

Jose pleads for press

Dr Babatunde Jose, the former managing director of the Daily Times of Nigeria Plc, has called on the Abacha regime to abrogate the Newspaper Registration Decree 43 of 1993. The decree was nullified recently by a Lagos High Court following an action brought by a daily newspaper.

Jose said at the second yearly Nigeria Media Merit Award (NMMA) ceremony, that the decree was "as obnoxious as the repealed newspaper proscription decree." He recalled that the military administration of General Ibrahim Babangida "whom we decorated as our Grand Patron last year, closed down some newspapers and magazines and a state-owned television station."

Jose, who is the chairman of the Board of Trustees of the NMMA continued: "Apart from the closure, the government unleashed a most vicious and the most obnoxious laws against the media. It was a time that tried some media practitioners.

He regretted that although the present military government had reversed the proscription of the affected media, Decree 43 "is still in existence like a Sword of Damocles hanging on the head

of all newspapers and magazines."

Lamido heads bank

General Sani abacha, the Head of State, has appointed Alhaji Sule Lamido the new chairman of the Nigerian Agriculture and Cooperative Bank (NACB). He replaces Alhaji Mohammed Abubakar Rimi, the Second Republic governor of Kano State who has been appointed the Minister of Communications.

Alhaji Sule was the national secretary of the defunct Social Democratic Party (SDP).

Christians protest

Christians have protested to the Federal Government over the declaration of public holidays on the weekend in which last Christmas fell. The practice before now was to shift the holidays to work days if major celebrations coincided with weekends.

In a letter titled "Christmas Holiday: A Plea for Fair Treatment", and addressed to Mr Alex Ibru, the Internal Affairs Minister, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) said that "Christians are not in the least happy that over such an unequal treatment." The "unequal treatment" referred to is the last moslem festival of Ramadan which fell on a weekend and for which the moslems were given their public holidays during work days."

But "this same year, Christmas and Boxing Day will occur on a weekend. Some of our dailies as well as the electronic media have reported that the Federal Military Government has decided that it shall not allow Christians to observe as public holidays any day after the weekend on which the festival falls", CAN said.

The letter, signed by Mr C.O. Williams, the general secretary of CAN, told the government that in all crucial matters of importance, especially religious issues, "it is of supreme importance that our governments, both federal and state, should see to it that their actions should be such as will not give the impression that a particular religion is entitled to extraordinary privileges which are denied to followers of other faiths."

A copy of the protest letter which was also sent to General Sani Abacha, the Head of State, said in conclusion that "in view of the foregoing, we of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) strongly advise that the Federal Military Government should declare Monday and Tuesday, 27 and 28 December, as this year's Christmas holidays."

Zik wants democracy

Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, the Owelle of Onitsha and Nigeria's first President, has urged Head of State Sani Abacha and other military officers to hasten up and return the country to democratic rule. Dr Azikiwe made the call while receiving Captain Femi Ejoor, the new military administrator of Enugu State, who paid him a courtesy call. He told the naval officer that "it is the desire of our people to move forward."

Dr Azikiwe added: "Now that you are working hard towards democracy, we must wish you good luck. I wish you and your colleagues will hasten to move the country towards democracy. There is no doubt in my mind that General Abacha and his team will hasten the return of democracy. I urge you and your colleagues to work hard and make Nigeria a democracy. In your next meeting, that is, meeting of the PRC, try to set in motion measures to achieve this desire of all Nigerians."

Seizure of passports

All political leaders swept aside by the dismissal of Ernest Shonekan's Interim Government and the dismantling of all democratic structures have been ordered to surrender both their personl and diplomatic passports to the nearest Immigration Office with immediate effect.

Those affected by the order which came from the national headquaarters of the Nigerian Immigration Service are the sacked civilian governors of the 30 states, their deputies and the secretaries to their governments. Also affected are members of the defunct National Assembly, the chairmen and secretaries of local councils, and the Speakers of state Houses of Assembly.

A statement signed by Alhaji Garba Abass, the Comptroller-General of the Nigerian Immigration Service, directed all immigration posts to forward all passports received to headquarters immediately.

NITEL fires 200

Alhaji Mohammed Abubakar Rimi, the communications minister, has ordered the immediate dismissal of 191 employees of Nigerian Telecommunications (NITEL) plc. Nine others, including a Territorial Manager in the Lagos Zone who was earlier reinstated on the orders of the sacked Interim Government, were either put on suspension, issued with letters of warning or placed on remedial deployment.

Two senior managers, three managers, three assistant managers, eight senior officers, 59 graduate operators, 97 operators and 14 technicians make up the statistics of the dismissed. A deputy General Manager, one Territorial Manager and four other staff were placed on remedial redeployment out of Lagos.

Mr Tayo Ekundayo, NITEL's public relations manager, who confirmed this explained that it was part of the strategies adopted by the new minister to heighten efficiency, effectiveness and result-orientation at NITEL. He said that the "decisive action" followed recent customer complaints about irregularities in billings and illegal diversion of telephone lines which prompted NITEL's management to constitute an in-house investigation panel to look into the complaints that were becoming rampant in the Lagos area.

Mr Ekundayo said that the investigations revealed that some corrupt staff were indeed colluding with touts to defraud NITEL and subscribers to the tune of millions of naira. He added that the punitive action taken in the Lagos area would be extended to other zones "until the company gets rid of all bad eggs in ints employment."

It will be recalled that upon his being sworn-in three weeks ago, Rimi vowed to sack all the corrupt officials in the departments of the ministry. It is thought that he will now direct his attention to Nigeria Postal Services (NIPOST).

Rail engines grounded

Five of the 15 locomotive engines bought by the Federal Government last year to help revitalise the operations of Nigerian Railway corporation (NRC) have been grounded. This was revealed by Mr Joseph Nwajei, the general secretary of the Nigerian Union of Railwaymen, who said that it partly accounted for the unsatisfactory performance of the corporation.

"Now that we have only 10 new engines left, with a few old ones, how can we think of sustaining ourselves, let alone breaking even?" he asked. Mr Nwajei said that the railway system was capital intensive and could hardly perform without enough good engines. He added that retrenchment would not solve any of the problems of the corporation.

FROM THE STATES

Cross River

About 300 nude women from Ohana Village recently stormed the Obubra offices of the National Agricultural Land Development Authority (NALDA) in a traditional protest. Work stopped temporarily and thousands of palm seedlings were destroyed by the women who ranged from teenagers to the aged. The women alleged non-compensation for their land on which the NALDA project is located. Efforts are on to resolve the crisis.

Edo

Professor Andrew Onokerhoraye, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Benin, has said that he was committed to ensuring that peace and tranquility reigned at the institution. He was speaking in Benin City after he was installed as grand patron of the Benin branch of the National Association of Staff of Universities.

Kwara

Police Commissioner Mustapha Ismail, the new administrator of the state, has warned all those lobbying to be appointed into his executive council to keep their distance because he was in no mood to entertain them. Alhaji Mustapha said this in Ilorin, the capital, after the government of the state was handed over to him by Brigadier-General Charles Mbaba who had been acting administrator.

Lagos

Colonel Olagunsoye Oyinlola, the administrator, has given traders who sell their wares inside houses constructed for the collection of refuse to stop the practice forthwith or face the wrath of the law. He said the government could no longer allow the unscrupulous to continue to destroy its efforts to provide comfort for the people. "Refuse houses are definitely not shops", he said. "They are meant for dumping refuse."

Ogun

Lieutenant-Colonel Daniel Akintonde, the new administrator, has given Mr S.M. Ogunbona, the director of personnel management of the Abeokuta South Local Council, three days within which to clear the refuse heaps in the council area. He gave the ultimatum when he made an unscheduled visit to the council headquarters in Ake. He expressed disappointment that the director and the other principal officers and staff of the council had not reported for duty when he arrived at the secretariat at 7:30 am.

Ondo

Lieutenant Colonel Lucky Torey, the new administrator, has ordered the immediate arrest and detention of one of ex-Governor Bamidele Olumilua's commissioners. This follows Colonel Torey's discovery that some money was missing from the state's coffers. The missing money, totalling N114 million, is alleged to have been lodged in three finance houses by the commissioner who collected 22 per cent interest upfront on the deposits.

Osun

Commander Anthony Udofia, the state administrator, has pledged to evolve an economic policy that would revamp the state's poor economy within the shortest possible time. He was speaking at Oshogbo, the capital, when he formally assumed duty on December 13. The naval officer promised that his administration would also pay adequate attention to education, health, roads, water supply, electricity and other social services.

Rivers

The National Directorate of Employment (NDE) in the state has threatened to prosecute its loan defaulters and their guarantors. Mr John Ayeni, the NDE director in the state, said that the names of the defaulters would soon be published and the directorate would not relent in its efforts to recover all the monies it had given out as loans. He noted that some of the beneficiaries had gone abroad while others simply abandoned the projects or changed addresses.

GHANA

Minister in C74m cheque row

The Minister of Trade and Industry, Mrs Emma Mitchell, has denied that she refused to accept a cheque for C74m from Kumasi Brewery Limited (KBL), which was due the government as dividend. The *Ghanaian Times* reported that on December 13, the minister failed to receive the team from KBL although a letter had been sent to inform her that a presentation would take place.

The paper reported that when KBL officials turned up at the minister's office they were met by the Chief Director of the ministry, Mr Haldane Lutterodt, who said the meeting was off. The paper said that the KBL team was told that since the appointment had been fixed through a telephone call made by the company's managing director, Mr O.A. Smith, and not by an official letter, the minister would not receive the cheque.

The *Ghanaian Times* said: "Mr Lutterodt then asked the disappointed KBL managing director and his entourage to `go back and do the right thing' after they had waited for two hours." Asked whether they should return to Kumasi with the C74m cheque, the director said: "There is nothing I can do about it."

On the day of the newspaper's report, Mrs Mitchell issued a denial. She said that she did not reject the cheque because there was no written appointment. She explained that she had asked for a brief on the company's financial performance during the year, and KBL's press office had promised this would be at her at desk three days before the presentation.

This did not arrive, and when the KBL officials turned up at the ministry they were asked to re-schedule the engagement for the next day. Mrs Mitchell said that without the brief she would have had difficulties assessing the KBL's financial performance and would not have been in a position to make appropriate comments during the ceremony. She asserted that under no circumstances would her ministry refuse a dividend due the government.

Mrs Mitchell's explanation was confirmed by Mr Oheneba Charles, KBL's public relations consultant, who added in a letter to the *Ghanaian Times*: "The minister accepted the offer that a brief be provided later that very day. The presentation of the cheque was then to be held the next day..."

Mr Charles said he was told to cancel press coverage of the event. It would seem that the *Ghanaian Times* reporter was unaware of the new date because Mr Charles had left. He wrote: "Your reporter, of course, did not know that the minister had made arrangements to receive the cheque on the very next day, and was in no way...refusing to accept money on behalf of the government as your reporter's story might be construed..."

Referring to the quote ascribed to Mr Smith, the KBL managing director, Mr

Charles wrote: "It is unfortunate that your reporter's story (and that quote in particular) seeks to create the impression of friction or zealous red tapeism where none exists."

'Budget rejected'

The 1994 Budget proposals have been rejected by the Parliamentary Finance Committee, *The Independent* has reported. The paper said members of the Committee wanted Finance Minister Kwesi Botchwey to "look at other areas apart from petrol", referring to the proposed increases in the price of petroleum products.

One suggestion from the Committee is for the minister to consider spreading out the tax on all cars rather than imposing it only on luxury vehicles. The tax break for the building industry should also be looked at, the Committee was reported to have told Mr Botchwey. According to *The Independent*, quoting sources, the Committee "proposed the levying of a small tax on building materials to avoid the present abuse where importers bring in goods and label them `building materials' to avoid paying tax."

Taxation was a major point of discussion by members of the Committee who suggested that "the crooks in high positions at Customs, Excise and Preventive Services (CEPS)" should be sacked, and that a less complicated procedure for tax collection be evolved.

The newspaper reported: "The Finance Committee believes that if both the CEPS and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) are made to account correctly for monies collected, there would be no need to increase fuel prices."

In order to facilitate government business in 1994, *The Independent* said an interim Appropriation Bill would be approved by Parliament after its Christmas recess until new Budget proposals were laid before the House.

● The country lost C581.5m in revenue this year due to fraud by importers working in concert with officials of CEPS, Finance Minister Botchwey has told Parliament. Out of this figure, only C216m has been recovered.

The revelation so enraged MPs that they called for a full-scale investigation and an overhaul of the organisation. The MPs were even more outraged when it was said that the masterminds behind the massive fraud were still in office while 15 of their accomplices occupying middle level positions had been suspended pending an investigation (*West Africa, October* 25).

Dr Botchwey explained that the fraud involved the doctoring of the value of imports, thus allowing importers to pay less tax. He said that the network included CEPS officials, importers and employees of the SGS (which verifies the value of imports) in Indonesia.

Another scam was for imports to be broken down into small orders so that each did not go above $5,000 when an SGS report was required, the minister said. Dr Botchwey noted a third method of bypassing tax, whereby goods were categorised as building materials.

He said that the ministry had requested CEPS to put its house in

order but "management were more enthusiastic about chasing culprits outside their offices than about identifying their staff involved." This was why his ministry had turned to the National Investigation Committee (NIC) "to secure the evidence before they were all destroyed."

The National Democratic Congress (NDC) MP for North Tongu, Mr Austin Gamey, was not impressed. He accused the ministry of "turning its eyes away" from the activities of the CEPS, thus allowing fraud to be perpetuated.

He said: "I believe the activities of CEPS may not be unknown to the ministry", adding that there were "enough grounds" for the ministry to prevent the losses.

● The New Patriotic Party (NPP) has called on the government to set up a commission of inquiry into the financial malpractices at the Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA). The party's call comes in the wake of revelations that C170m was misappropriated between May 1991 and May this year (*West Africa*, November 15).

The NPP is of the opinion that the sole investigator appointed to unravel the fraud, whose mandate has been extended by six months, did not have the necessary powers to conduct an intensive and extensive inquiry. "An internal inquiry by the AMA could easily end up as a face-saving exercise which will throw up some scapegoats, but conceal a great deal which must be made public in the national interest," the statement said.

● The country has the potential to break the poverty barrier, Finance Minister Botchwey has told the new Dutch ambassador to Ghana. He said while "other African countries are registering negative growth, Ghana is doing well with about two per cent growth in her gross domestic product."

● Ghana has been re-elected to serve on the UN board of auditors for the seventh consecutive time.

● The activities of the Ghana National Commission on children (GNCC) were crippled because some C1bn was stolen from the organisation between 1987 and 1990 through fraud and bad management. The revelations were made by Parliament's Committee on Public Accounts while presenting the Auditor-General's Report for the period to the House.

Compensation furore

Over 100 landlords in Tamale are refusing to allow their houses to be demolished to make way for the government's Road Expansion Programme until they receive compensation. They are staying put with their families.

The problem was brought to light by Tamale Municipal secretary Alhaji Baba Ibrahimah during his maiden address to the third ordinary session of the local assembly. He said that 200 houses were listed for demolition along the Tamale-Bolgotanga road but there was a need to revalue them because there were discrepancies in the payment of compensation.

He said that some 20 years ago, compensation ranging from C964 to C57,607 was paid to owners of 53 houses. Alhaji Ibrahimah said that owners of 60 houses did not receive compensation. He therefore urged the assembly to take a critical look at the situation and appealed to the government for "fresh valuation and payment to be made to the landlords on the Bolgotanga road."

● The Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT) is to extend its pension scheme to cover members of the police force and the fire service.

● The National House of Chiefs has supported the growing call for dual citizenship by urging Parliament to amend the Constitution to make this a reality. The chiefs' views were made known by the president of the House, Odeneho Oduro Numapau II, while addressing a meeting of its Standing Committee in Sunyani.

Education strategy

The country's universities have been urged to clearly define their priorities to enable the government to provided assistance. The call came from Finance Minister Botchwey who was speaking at a seminar on strategic planning for the University of Ghana. He told the Legon gathering that the government was determined to double its investment in human resources development and to improve the quality of tertiary education. "We recognise that our country's destiny is linked with how developed her human resources are," he said.

Dr Botchwey commended the university's authorities for holding the seminar, adding: "We are firmly behind

this effort of yours to fashion out the role of the government and the private sector in the real potential of your institution. You have the potential to become the premier university in sub-Saharan Africa if you have a clear vision."

● The *People's Daily Graphic* has reported that lecturers at the University of Ghana are using loudspeakers to teach because of large classes. A source told the newspaper: "Classes, especially for the social and political sciences are so large that we have to adopt this means to disseminate lectures."

The source said some 6,000 applications were received for the 1993/94 academic year but only 2,057 students were admitted.

SIERRA LEAONE

Lady Dorman dies

It has been reported that Lady Monica Dorman, the widow of Sir Maurice Dorman on whom an obituary was published in the issue of November 29, has died. She passed away in London. Sir Maurice was the first Governor-General of Sierra Leone after the country achieved independence in 1961.

● The permanent representative at the United Nations who has been appointed a judge of the Internatoional Court of Justice at The hague is Mr Abdul G. Koroma, and not Mr Abdul G. Kargbo as reported in the issue of December 6-12.

Nigeria trains soldiers

Nigeria is assisting Sierra Leone in the training and reorganisation of its armed forces. According to Brigadier General Fred Chijuka, the Nigerian director of Defence Information, a senior officer had been named to coordinate the assignment for an initial period of three years under an article of understanding signed by the two countries.

Sierra Leone had earlier written to formally request for assistance for its armed forces which have been fighting rebel incursion in the eastern part of the country since 1991.

Nigeria now has a battalion of troops in Sierra Leone, helping to maintain security. It is also assisting The Gambia to retrain its armed forces, with the commander of the Nigerian contingent acting as the country's Chief of Army Staff.

GAMBIA

Anti-tetanus campaign

The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare has launched the government's Neonatal Tetanus Elimination Action Plan. The move is in response to a call by the World Health Organisation to eliminate the killer disease by 1995.

WHO estimates that 660,000 neonatal tetanus deaths occur annually in the developing world. In The Gambia, reliable reports from the Royal Victoria Hospital, the country's main referral centre in Banjul, show that in 1992 there was a 66.6 per cent fatality rate. Twelve out of 18 children with neonatal tetanus who were admitted at the Paediatric Unit died.

Mr Landing Jallow Sonko, the Minister of Health, said at the launching ceremony of the Polyclinic in Banjul that the figure was very high. He appealed to the entire population to support the Tetanus Toxoid Immunisation Campaign directed at all women of child bearing age. Under the scheme, women between 14 to 45 years will receive five successive doses of TT vaccine at appropriate intervals of one month, six months and twelve months.

According to Dr Melville George, the director of Health Services, neonatal tetanus accounts for a significant proportion of the high infant mortality in The Gambia. Both Unicef and WHO are assisting the government to implement the action plan against tetanus.

COTE D'IVOIRE

New cabinet

Newly appointed Prime Minister Daniel Kablan Duncan announced, on December 15, the setting up of a 24-strong interim government which will run the country's affairs until the funerals of the late President, Felix Houphouet-Boigny, scheduled to take place on February 7, 1994. Nine portfolios, including those of defence held by Leon Konan Kofi, the interior by Emile Constant-Bombet, foreign affairs by Amara Essy, and raw materials by Guy-Alain Gauze, remain in the hands of the incumbents. The Prime Minister himself will combine his duties as head of the government and minister of the economy, finance and planning.

He will be assisted in the latter position by Niamian N'Goram, chairman/managing director of the International Bank of West Africa in Cote d'Ivoire (BIAO), as a minister delegate in charge of the department. The newcomers, mostly technocrats, include, Bernard Zadi Zaourou, leader of the small opposition party, the Union of Social-democrats (USD), as minister of culture; Timothee Ahoua N'Guetta, formerly secretary general on the National Assembly, as minister of state in chrge of relations with the institutions; Laurent Donna Fologo, secretary general of the ruling *Parti Democratique de Cote-d'Ivoire (PDCI)*, as minister of state for national integration; Rear Admiral Lamine Fadika, who was tipped for the Premiership, as minister of mines and energy; and Lancine Gbon Coulibaly, mayor of Korogho, as minister of environment and tourism. It is envisaged that a more broad-based government, possibly encompassing the two main opposition parties of the *Front Populaire Ivoirien* and the *Parti Ivoirien des Tavailleurs*, will be set up after Houphouet's funerals.

ZAIRE

Shaba 'secedes'

The governor of the rich southeastern mining province of Shaba, formerly known as Katanga, proclaimed the "total autonomy" of the province on December 12. The autonomy proclamation which was made at a rally in the mining town of Kolwezi in the presence of Nguza Karl-I-Bond, deputy Prime Minister in Faustin Birindwa's government (backed by President Mobutu), was rejected by Karl-I-Bond's own government. The neighbouring provinces of East and West Kasai are reportedly planning to follow the Shaba example. Karl-I-Bond later denied having proclaimed the Shaba autonomy. In a separate development, clashes have been reported in the province of Kasai Oriental.

According to the minister of communication in the Tshisekedi government, one person was killed when soldiers in the town of Mbuji-Mayi opened fire on a crowd protesting at the introduction of a new Zairean currency.

GABON

Bongo's warning

President Omar Bongo, the declared winner in the first round of the December 5 Presidential elections with 51,07 percent of the votes, has urged "all those who took part in the ... President race to participate in the running of our country". Speaking on radio and television on December 14 for the fisrt time since his "controversial" reelection, Bongo further warned that the "disorder" and "insurrection" depicted by the "parallel government" announced by Father Paul Mba Abessole "cannot be tolerated", and asked the government "to take steps to ensure that all those who are members of this so-called [parallel] government are dismissed from office". He indicated his option for a government based on "broad-consensus", inviting the new Prime Minister he has appointed to "involve everybody in forming the government".

CONGO

Measures on violence

The national assembly and the senate, at a meeting on December 16, adopted a series of measures aimed at restoring peace in the country. These include, among others, the dispatching both abroad and inside the country of parliamentary missions to explain the country's political realities and awaken the consciousness of the population on the need for lasting peace respectively; the need for the acceptance by the political class of alternative governance through the democratic process; the need for the respect of legalised institutions, recognizing in particular the rigfhts and the duties of the ruling administration and those of the opposition, in conformity with existing regulations; and the necessity for the state media to give equal coverage political training activities and rational unse of all state journalists. Other measures concern the safety and of people and property, especially of politicians who are entitled to such protection; the neccessity to resolve the problems of the victims of violene progressively; the dismantling of armed gangs; the maintenance of order; the need for direct coordination in the case of any conflict between the parties involved; and, the setting by the bureau national assembly of an ad hoc parliamentary commission, charged with the monitoring and assessing the measures and directives adopted.

● The joint chiefs of staff of the armed forces, the police and gendarmerie have issued a statement in which they put the number of members of the security forces killed in the social and political upheavals of December 11-12, at 13. They include eight soldiers, two officers, four policemen and one gendarme. Meanwhile hospital sources have put the total figure of people who died in the clashes at "at least 80".

GUINEA

Pre-election killings

At least two people were killed in clashes on December 13 in Conakry, the capital, and two others in the mining town of Kindia, some 100km from Conakry, between supporters of President Lansana Conte and Alpha Conde of the Rally of the Guinean People (RPG), both of whom were candidates in the December 19 Presidential polls, according to official sources. Several human rights organisations, quoting witnesses, have, however, stated that seven people were killed. The exact circumstances of the deaths were not known. Meanwhile, some 200 opposition supporters were reported, on December 17, to have destroyed the embassy in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, and arrested the staff for several hours in protest at the failure to provide electoral cards two days before the presidential polls. The country's embassy in Dakar, Senegal, was reported to have suffered a similar fate the prveious day.

TOGO

Salary arrears machinery

The government has recently decided to set up a new centralized list of civil servants in order to ensure the speedy payment of salaries of those who are "effectively in active service", and to avoid paying some workers several times as well as to prevent absent or ghost workers from receiving salary payments from the state. All of the directors, chiefs of service, state workers and labour unions, have been invited to contribute to the preparation of this "all-important" list.

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Spain to cut aid

The Spanish government has announced that it is to cut its aid from January 1 following the expulsion on December 11 of its ambassador in Bata, the capital. Speaking on December 13 at the Torrejon military air base, near Madrid, just before a trip to Brussels, the Spanish foreign minister, Javier Solana, indicated that the decision, yet to be confirmed, did not affect humanitarian aid. Meanwhile, the secretary of the embassy in Madrid, Marcelo-Beca Ondo Mia, has also been expelled from Spain. In a separate development, the governor of the northeastern Kie-Ntem province has reportedly directed an assault on the headquarters of the opposition party of the Popular Union and arrested six of its activists.

MAURITANIA

New political party

A new political formation known as the National Rally for Freedom, Democracy and Justice was legalised on December 16 as the country's 18th political party.

SOUTH AFRICA

Clash with Buthelezi

The Transitional Executive Council (TEC) plans to use legal muscle in its dispute with the KwaZulu government. The TEC will take legal action to force the KwaZulu Police (KZP) Commissioner Roy During to give it information on alleged KZP hit squads it has demanded.

The TEC adopted the resolution on hit squads, when it was proposed by Joe Slovo, who said Gen During was obliged to cooperate with the TEC. He said the issue had to be followed up immediately, as it was essential to ensuring elections were free and fair. A sub -committee has been appointed to pursue the issue.

The TEC also suspended a 216m rand loan from the Development Bank of South Africa to Bophuthatswana for development projects, stating that the loan had not been referred to the subcouncil on finance.

● The Commonwealth Observer Mission to South Africa (COMAS) has issued a strong plea to all political parties to participate in the transitional arrangements being established in South Africa and to contest the first non-racial democratic elections due next April. The plea was made in the mission's third Interim Report to the Commonwealth Secretary-General.

The report expressed concern at the implications of the delay in effecting the reintegration of the "independent homelands" until after the elections, especially in the case of Bophuthatswana" and Ceskei, which have refused reincorporate transitional agreements into their statutes.

The report acknowledged the treat posed to the April elections by violence. However it noted that the areas where political violence was rife had been narrowed down to Natal and two townships -Thokoza and Katlehong - in the Pretoria - Witwatersrand-Vaal (PWV) region.

● South Africa has set up its first international arms office in the United Arab Emirates to break into the lucrative market. State-owned weapons giant Armscor (Armaments Corporation of South Africa) opened the office in Abu Dhabi last month, and it covers the six nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), consisting of the Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait, as well as other Middle East countries.

● South Africa and the European Community have established diplomatic relations. A statement issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs says an agreement signed by the director general of external political relations, Mr G. Burghardt, provides for normal diplomatic privilege and immunity for the EC delegation in South Africa. Mr Erwan Fouere of Belgium has been accredited as head of the delegation.

MALAWI

2,000 MYPs missing

In Malawi there is growing concern over the whereabouts of 7,000 militia from the ruling Malawi Congress Party, the (Malawi) young pioneers, MYPs, who fled into the bush more than a week ago when soldiers began to disarm them.

Disarmament was started by the army following the fatal shooting of two soldiers by the MYP in the northern town of Mzuzu on December 1.

In dependent newspaper "Monitor" said about 2,000 armed MYP cadres in three trucks were seen across the boarder at Muloza to a Renamo (Mozambique National Resistance) base in Mulanje district east of Mozambique. President Banda who armed the MYP as his personal security has appealed to hiding pioneers to return to their homes and bases.

INTERNATIONAL

Action against toxic dumping

African countries worried about the dumping of toxic wastes on their territories by Western companies can take heart from the recent move by the World Bank to prevent this happening. The bank took the unprecedented step of warning Congo that it was the target for dumping of toxic material by a Belgian company.

Explained Mohamed El-Ashry, director of the bank's Environmental Department: "We happened to hear about a proposal of a Belgian company to ship toxic wastes to the Congo. We felt that the report had enough credence to send a letter to the President of Congo about it late in October."

He disclosed this at a press briefing in Washington. El-Ashry did not know the name of the company involved or whether any Congolese officials had approved such a shipment. He said the bank heard that a Belgian company was telling Congolese officials it would build a facility to handle that country's waste medical supplies. The plant would handle 200m tonnes of hazardous waste. However, World Bank officials noted that Congo's disposals needs were two million tonnes a year of medical waste.

Although El-Ashry stressed that the bank was not seeking to become the world's environmental policeman, he conceded that it probably had not taken such an active role in the past. "This is part of a new attitude toward environmental protection and sensitivity in the bank at the present time," he said.

The bank has taken sweeping actions in recent years to improve its record, including hiring El-Ashry more than two years ago as the first head of the Environmental Department.

Environmentalists have attacked the bank for years for lending money for such environmentally destructive projects as dams. African leaders themselves have been so worried of late about the dumping on toxic matter on the continent that they have had to sign a treaty forbidding the import of hazardous wastes.

Said El-Ashry: "African leaders told us at the Earth Summit in 1992 that one of their biggest environmental problems is hazardous waste shipments, often disguised as such things as construction equipment."

Fighting desertification

The recurrent cycle of drought and famine in Africa has attracted an international effort to halt the accelerating spread of deserts that destroy agriculturally-productive regions. The UN will open a debate in January at its headquarters on a proposed treaty to the problem in Africa.

The broad aim of the treaty is to get the industrialised countries to assist farmers at the local level on the continent to adopt environmentally-sustainable agricultural practices, preferably based on traditional methods. A draft of the treaty, which is expected to be completed in June, has been circulated to those taking part in the January conference.

The idea of such a treaty, which African countries have sought for quite some time now, gathered momentum after it was recommended by about 150 countries attending the Earth Summit in Rio, Brazil last year. Though desertification affects virtually every continent, it has taken a particularly heavy human toll in Africa where it has led to starvation and migration.

BRIAN MOYO *FINDS LITTLE TO ENTHUSE ABOUT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA'S ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE IN 1993*

Era of trade liberalisation

"WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE between Tanzania and Goldman Sachs?" ran the question on the front page of the London *Guardian* section 2 on December 10. Answer: "One is an African country that makes $2.2 billion a year and shares it among 25 million people. The other is an investment bank that makes $2.6 billion...and shares most of it between 161 people."

The article on which this comparison is based, goes on to state that 100 out of the 1,500 employees in Sachs's London office will receive Christmas bonuses of up to $1m each. Astounding! On another level however, the most significant point to be gleaned from that comparison may be that it illustrates the extraordinary weakness of African economies.

Nothing could be more explicit about the seriousness of Africa's economic problems than the illustration drawn by the *Guardian* article. In one throw it demonstrates not only the poverty levels in which many Tanzanians must live under such a shoe string budget, but by the same token, projects the acute nature of the continent's economic plight.

Around about this time last year, I stated in the year's review of Africa's economic performance that "the most crucial fact about the economic situation in sub-Saharan Africa, according to the 1992 World Bank debt tables, was that the region owes the developing world and its banks a total of $178bn."

I also noted in the same report that it will be "difficult to envisage any plan that could alter the situation."

The same conclusion appears inescapable in the summing up of sub-Saharan Africa's economic performance in 1993. However one might look at the contemporary economy of sub-Saharan Africa or its growth potential in years to come, the one factor that can not be ignored is the extent of the region's external debt. Debt servicing alone consumes about one-third of the continent's total export earnings while the substance of the real debt itself keeps growing - and this despite debt forgiveness from some donor countries.

According to the latest 'World Debt Tables' from the World Bank, despite debt forgiveness of some $22bn since 1985, mostly by bilateral creditors, "the total debt stock of the severely indebted low-income countries has risen by about $67bn."

In a recent report by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the burden of debt servicing facing sub-Saharan Africa was cited as a factor that will affect economic recovery. Furthermore, Dr Boutros-Ghali noted that the region was showing a declining access to funds while the former Eastern bloc was being favoured by Western donors and investors.

"More than any other world region, Africa remains highly dependent on external financing. In many African countries domestic savings rates are as low as 10 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), compared to more than 20 per cent in some other developing regions. As a result, domestic financing is only able to cover one-quarter of Africa's capital investment needs," Dr Boutros-Ghali's report says.

Net financial resource flows to Africa declined to $18.4bn in 1992 from $22.2bn in 1990. When measured in constant 1985 dollars, this meant that Africa obtained resource flows of just $14.7bn in 1991 - below the $15.8bn received in 1985, the year before the start of the UN Programme of Action for Africa Economic Recovery and Development; predecessor of the New Agenda. And when allowance is made for repayment of capital, interest and profits, net transfers of aid, loans and foreign investment in Africa, in real terms, declined from $10.4bn in 1990 to $5.3bn in 1992.

In his report Dr Boutros-Ghali joins the chorus of those who are urging donor countries to write off ODA debt, which still amounts to $30bn of the total. In addition, he says the Paris Club of official creditors should adopt the full Trinidad terms for debt reduction, which allows for two-thirds of eligible debt to be written-off as opposed to the 50 per cent reduction currently on offer.

Overseas development Assistance (ODA) to Africa declined from a peak of $19.7bn in 1990 to $18.3bn in 1991 and $12.1bn in 1992, a fall of 33 per cent in the latter year. For sub-Saharan Africa specifically, ODA in 1992 fell by 22 per cent from the 1991 level.

The 1993 annual reports of both the World Bank and its subsidiary arm, International Finance Bank (IFC), show the fortunes of sub-Saharan Africa to be in no better shape than the previous year.

The World Bank report says worldwide recession reduced demand for sub-Saharan Africa's exports and depressed commodity prices.

"Most of the declines in primary commodity prices took place during the latter part of 1992, particularly in the fourth quarter, when pessimism about the economic outlook in the industrial countries was at its peak."

Furthermore, the World Bank report forecast a positive although modest per capita income growth for sub-Saharan Africa in 1993 or in 1994. The projection was based on developments in the first half of the fiscal 1993 and on the assumption that good weather will prevail and commodity prices remain stable.

While the World Bank continues to proclaim that it's priority is poverty alleviation, statistics in its 1992 World Development Report showed that there was no significant progress in reducing poverty during the second half of the 1980s, when the number of poor people rose at roughly the rate of population growth. Sub-Saharan Africa continues to register high in the tables of the poor with between 200m and 250m being in that category.

"As the proportion of sub-Saharan Africa's population in poverty increases, the number of the poor in the region would rise by about 9m a year on average. By the end of the decade about one-half of the world's poor would live in Asia and one quarter in sub-Saharan Africa," a recent World Bank report noted.

"The outlook for the rest of the 1990s is that the number of poor people would decline in Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America. Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in which the situation ie expected to deteriorate," says a World Bank paper, 'Dimensions of Poverty'.

The much touted privatisation, trade liberalisation and the selling of parastatals and other government controlled economic sectors to the private sector, are fast becoming the main issues of focus when Western governments and donors consider giving aid to the region. And the message seems to have got through to African governments if the number of investment, trade and industry conferences being organised by African countries in Western capitals is anything to go by. London for instance was the venue for high profile conferences on investment opportunities in Zimbabwe, Ghana, Tunisia, Uganda, Nigeria and many other African states. Zimbabwe and Uganda showed just how much they want to woo investors by having their respective presidents, Robert Mugabe and Yoweri Museveni, visit London and personally address potential investors.

During his visit in July President Mugabe said foreign investors investing in Zimbabwe would be able to remit 100 per cent of their profits and acquire shares in companies quoted on the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange. Given that the Zimbabwean Finance Minister is on record for once declaring that the stock exchange is the "prostitute of the economy," the liberalisation of the regulations governing foreign investment has been a great turn around. But more and more African countries are following this path and it is conceivable that more will do so as we enter 1994. Sceptics however will continue to question whether the era of trade liberalisation and privatisation gathering momentum is not merely a reflex action enforced by IMF and World Bank prescriptions instead of a measure sincerely embarked upon because of a firm belief that they offer the best option out of the debt crisis.

Zimbabwe commended

Zimbabwe was strongly commended for continued implementation of its adjustment programme in the face of adverse circumstances at a recent Paris Club meeting chaired by Sir Stephen Denning, director of the Southern Africa department of the World Bank.

The Zimbabwe delegation was led by Mr John Nkomo, Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare.

According to a World Bank press statement, donors praised Zimbabwe's handling of drought relief, the steps taken in continuing trade liberalisation, actions decontrolling investment, and trade liberalisation of agricultural marketing.

"The donors urged the government to accelerate the implementation of elements in the programme designed to preserve progress made to date in the social sectors and to protect the poor from transitional hardships, including improvement of the Social Development Fund that the government has established. Donors welcomed the Poverty Alleviation Plan meant to deal with the overall problem of poverty," the statement says.

It adds that Zimbabwe will be expected to improve the investment climate in order to generate a supply response and accelerate economic growth and employment creation.

"Faster domestic deregulation, and continued trade liberalisation and export promotion, complemented by continued fiscal adjustment and monetary restraint, are critical if the adjustment programme is to achieve its targets."

According to the statement, the most obvious possibilities for reduction in public expenditures are losses by the public sector enterprises, civil service and military expenditures. It noted too that privatisation of public sector institutions whose functions could be better carried out by the private sector was urged, "along with improved performance of those parastatals that would remain in the public sector."

Furthermore, the report says donors expressed their support for Zimbabwe's land reform which is aimed at a more equitable distribution of agricultural land for the benefit of smallholders in communal lands.

"However, donors emphasised that the programme should be implemented prudently so as to promote future investment and the resettlement programme should be implemented with a view to maintaining agricultural productivity."

Cocoa prices slip

Cocoa prices registered a further slide on December 16 at the London Commodity Exchange when the second position futures fell by £32 a tonne to £988 a tonne.

Fears that the death of President Felix Houphouet-Boigny of Ivory Coast would precipitate a power struggle that could affect cocoa deliveries proved unfounded and much of the sell-off in the market reflected the peaceful transition that took place in the country.

Ivory Coast, which is one of the leading cocoa producers, has also indicated that it may sell its mild crop of cocoa which will be harvested between April and June next year, immediately rather than with the main crop, as happened this year. Ivory Coast's mid crop is usually between 100,000 and 150,000 tonnes compared with a main crop of 650,000 tonnes. However, part of this crop was damaged this year in transit and has not been exported.

A commodity analyst at GNI has speculated that cocoa prices couldslip further to about £900 a tonne, despite the strong buying interest in the market.

Meanwhile, oil markets have reportedly shrugged off news that oil producers outside the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) might cut oil production to stem the falling prices.

According to agency reports Oman informed its customers that their shipments would be cut by five per cent from January. If the cut is made it would amount to 40,000 barrels a days, which according to traders, would have a negligible impact on worldwide surplus of crude oil.

Reports also said Egypt was considering a similar cut in its production level.

NEWS IN BRIEF

African art finding market in US

An American art dealer Bill Karg says he is hopeful than more exposure of the African art in the US will bring good dividends to the artists themselves and enhance Africa's reputation. Karg, who has been selling African art in the US for six years said recently that sales had risen in the last two years. However, Karg said people who make a financial investment in art need to see the artists themselves and gain knowledge of their credentials. By educating his buyers in African art, Karg said he is building "credibility for the entire concept of contemporary African art."

US pledges support for Burundi

President Bill Clinton has pledged financial support for Burundi in the wake of the assassination of President Ndadaye and the inter-ethnic violence which ensued.

Although Clinton didn't state the sums that might be involved he said the US intends to work with the donor community "to do what we can to relieve the suffering and help Burundi recover."

He also said the US will continue to work closely with the international organisations and allies to ensure that Burundi returns securely to the path of stable democracy.

Nigerians on UK marine course

Six Nigerian employees of the Liquified Natural Gas (LNG) Ltd have begun a two-year Business and Technology Education Council Higher National Diploma (BTEC HND) in Marine Engineering at South Tyneside College. They are Charles Oni, Michael Okope Deghi, Joseph Assam, Odo Eke Adaji, Kenneth Essien and Christopher Moses Anom. They will be studying advanced firefighting and first aid as well as Marine Engineering. Other cadets on the course are from Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, and Tristan da Cunha.

Mozambique opens railway corridor

Mozambique President Joaquim Chissano has inaugurated the Nacala-Entre Lagos railway in Cuamba district Niassa Province. This follows the construction of the 538km of the Nacala Corridor's 610km. The Nacala Entre Lagos railway now has the capacity for improved transport of passengers and goods from Mozambique and landlocked countries, particularly Malawi and Zambia. The work cost more than $293m and involved the general construction of Nacala Port and the railway linking the port to Malawi.

Uganda, China sign contract

Uganda's Electricity Board (UEB) recently signed an 84bn-shilling contract with a Chinese company, Sietico, to begin civil works for the proposed second hydro-electric power station at Jinja. The first unit, of 40MW capacity, will be on line in three and a half years. The project will eventually more than double the installed electricity generation capacity in the country. The total cost of the project is about $300m. The civil world will be funded by the International Development Association (IDA) and the African Development Bank.

China threat to UK companies

China has warned that British companies will continue to lose in competition for business in China unless Hong Kong governor Chris Patten backs down on democratic reform. A Chinese official said most British companies had been excluded from an underground railway project because of the row over Hong Kong. His comments have prompted British business officials to warn that by taking this course, China risks damaging its international trading standing.

UACN moves away from Unilever

After over a century of marriage, the United Africa Company (UACN) and Unilever are parting ways. Bassey Ndiokho, the chairman and chief executive of UACN, has said the change will enable UACN to develop its broad-based portfolio of businesses, achieve its growth objectives and build international links.

Ndiokho insists it has been a divorce without rancour and that some kind of relationship will still be maintained. The two companies will establish a joint venture company to carry on UACN's caterpillar dealership. UACN will hold 60 per cent of the equity of the new company while Unilever will hold 40 per cent and will continue to provide technical support. UACN will still maintain a relationship with Unilever in training and management.

Unilever is not pulling its proceeds from the disengagement out of Nigeria however, it will acquire the assets of the personal appliances division of UACN, A.J. Seward.

Despite the apparently amicable nature of the divorce there are still apprehensions. Why break up a marriage that has benefitted both parties for over a century? Who initiated the parting of the ways, and why? What message will this development send to other corporate bodies, Nigerian trading partners and other multinationals? Ndiokho, when he broke the news officially to the press on December 1, 1993, said all those fears had been taken into consideration and the UACN management still considered it a good move. UACN had initiated the move not because it wanted to move apart at that initial stage, but because it was considering moves into business areas that were not in the ambit of Unilever's core business. These areas, a source has told *West Africa*, are in oil prospecting and banking.

That Unilever still has confidence in the Nigerian economy is demonstrated by the company not taking its funds out of Nigeria but instead reinvesting them in a new business concern. The question still remains - why change a winning formula? UACN, over the past 100 years, has been an exceedingly profitable company which has been able to survive the turbulence in Nigeria's economy.

In the 1992 Annual Report, the most recent, Ndiokho, after evaluating the unstable macro-economic environment of the Nigerian economy, proudly said that the performance of UAC of Nigeria plc could best be "evaluated against the economic performance of the country as a whole. Generally most divisions, because of effective and efficient management, performed well in spite of uncertain and difficult operating conditions and low disposable income."

In its review of 1992, the company said the business environment had proved very challenging - economic growth had slowed down, inflation had accelerated, the naira had suffered a sharp decline, putting pressures on costs; there was a high interest rate and reduced consumer spending power, but "UAC of Nigeria responded purposely to these challenges. The strength of its balanced portfolio of business was amply demonstrated by the achievement of overall volume growth and a significant increase in earnings per share."

Its divisions - A.J. Seward, the personal appliances section; Bodpark, the packing division; AT & P, the Wood Product Division; UAC Foods; Tractor and Equipment, distributors of Caterpillar; its merchandising and marketing divisions - are not all market leaders but have impressive records nevertheless. And UACN is the largest employer of labour in the country after the government. In achieving these results, Unilever contributed immensely. While the chief executive since 1975 has been a Nigerian, the deputy chief executive has always been seconded from Unilever. This has always lent UACN the aura of a company that one can do business with.

It is the need to maintain this credibility that UACN will have to contend with as it charts its own way to growth. A few details are still to be worked out - who the new technical partners will be, and obtaining approval from the Security and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the shareholders. The SEC is not expected to cause difficulties but the shareholders may be none too pleased, since they are used to receiving large dividends at the end of every annual general meeting and are not sure what returns they will receive under the new arrangement.

UACN is charting a controversial course for itself, learning to live without its partner of over a century. The severity of the withdrawal symptoms that it will suffer will be known when the dust that will surely accompany the parting of the ways finally settles down.

Bassey Ndiokho succeeded Ernest Shonekan in 1992 as Chief Executive of UACN, the largest conglomerate in the country. As befits a UACN Chief Executive, Ndiokho dresses conservatively but and keeps his eyes on the profit margin. Under him, the company is taking its biggest decision in over a century. He regards it as one of the decisions that occurs in the life of a business executive. On December 11, he talked to the press on why UACN had decided to set out on its own.

Why the parting of ways now after over 100 years?

If you look at our results in the past five years they have been impressive. We have not let Unilever down and they had no reason to be dismayed. It has been a fruitful relationship.

But UAC does not have much of Unilever's core business. Unilever does not want to be involved in the furniture industry because of environmental factors but we feel we should be in it because furniture is important to Nigeria.

But what of the credibility on UACN future operations?

We will try and explain our case satisfactorily; we will deliver to our shareholders. We have never disappointed them. We have a name, reputation and image to protect and we will protect them. We know it is difficult to accept change. We believe it is the right thing, that is why we are doing it. We are a diversified company and we will continue to be diversified because the advantages of diversification are immense.

Who initiated the move?

The initiative came from UACN. It was not Unilever that first said "can I let you go?" it was when we were discussing growth that this came about.

What is the size of the Unilever that is going into the new venture?

Our financial advisers, all external, are working on the figures. We are doing everything above board.

Who are UACN's new technical partners, and will Unilever staff on secondment be asked to go?

Unilever will still be engaged in the training of UACN staff and manpower development - secondment from Unilever will not be stopped. On technical partners we already have some and negotiations are continuing with others.

Will Unilever be pulling out of the country and what are UACN's new growth areas?

Unilever is not taking one penny outside the country. On the new growth areas, we have identified over a dozen areas that will lead to growth in our profitability and turnover.

Bola Olowo

FINANCE

Debt crisis

A report by the UK-based charity, Oxfam, says heavy debt payments to the IMF and World Bank by the poorest countries are holding up recovery and that loans should be rescheduled or written off.

According to the report debt payments to multilateral creditors by 19 "severely indebted, low income countries" now account for 30 per cent of their debt service payments, "more than double a decade ago."

The report, which proposes a new issue of Special Drawing Rights by the Fund geared specifically to debt reduction, also notes that payment to the IMF represent a "special problem since they have outstripped the provision of new finance by some $2bn since the mid-1980s."

The Oxfam paper also warns that Africa's overall debt crisis is deepening, with the debt stock tripling over the past decade.

CURRENCY RATES

Rates against US Dollar on December 17, 1993

Bank of America NT and SA
Economic Department, London

The exchange rates listed are middle rates between buying and selling rates as quoted by Bank of America. All rates quoted are indicative. They are not based on, and are not intended to be used as a basis for particular transactions. Bank of America NT and SA does not undertake to trade in all listed foreign currencies, and neither Bank of America NT & SA nor *West Africa* magazine assume responsibility for errors.

Country	Currency	Value of $
Angola	*New Kwanza*	6500.32
Cape Verde	*Escudo*	74.20
CFA Zone*	*Franc*	291.90
Gambia	*Dalasi*	9.47
Ghana	*Cedi*	770.00
Guinea-Bissau	*Peso*	5000.00
Guinea Rep	*Franc*	812.29
Liberia	*Dollar*	1.00
Mauritania	*Ouguiya*	123.20
Nigeria	*Naira*	40.00
Sao Tome	*Dobra*	240.00
Sierra Leone	*Leone*	560.00
Zaire	*New Zaire*	6.06
France	*Franc*	5.838
Japan	*Yen*	109.85
Switzerland	*Swiss Franc*	1.4589
UK	*Pound Sterling*	1.49
Germany	*Deutschmark*	1.7073
	SDR	1.37250
	ECU	1.13012

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Behind the American bar

ALL OVER AFRICA, listeners to the BBC are meeting Cash Madam, the domineering owner of "American Bar", in a new drama series featured on Spice Taxi, the BBC's weekly African cultural programme. Jeillo Edwards, one of Britain's best loved actresses, will be developing the character of the powerful Cash Madam who will be battling on the airwaves with her downtrodden and scheming bartender, Jabu.

Originally from Sierra Leone, Jeillo has been in Britain since 1960 and has been contributing to BBC's African drama for 25 years. She moved to London to study acting after three years in England when she made her own piece of history as the first African to study for the Guildhall drama exams. And in spite of her parents' opposition to her choice of career, she went on to earn gold, silver and bronze medals at the London Academy of Music and Arts.

As one of Britain's first African actors, her acting career has also included roles in British films and television - although her memories are not always happy about the way she was cast in the early days. "You rarely played a black part with a name," she says. You were always nameless as a "fat black woman" or a "market woman". Nevertheless she was in constant demand as an actress not just for her tremendous skill, but because of her humour, goodwill and kindness.

● Jeillo will be entertaining the BBC's listeners all over Africa with her portrayal of Cash Madam in the "American Bar" in December. The series will be on "Spice Taxi" every week as a new feature in the popular cultural programme which is broadcast at 0630, 1500 and 1830 on Saturdays and at 1930 on Tuesdays.

Jeillo Edwards

African-British Association

THE AFRICAN-BRITISH Association, an organisation dedicated to the promotion of the economic advancement of people of African origin domicile in the UK, was launched in London recently.

The launching ceremony which was held at the Elephant and Castle Leisure Centre in South London was well attended.

Chaired by Miss Grant, who represented her brother, (MP Bernie Grant of the UK House of Commons, was unable to attend as he was ill), the launching ceremony kicked off with lively music provided by Jide Chord and his group. In her address to the mixed audience, Miss Grant attempted to clarify her brother's position concerning the issue of reparations and emigration.

She said that there are many people of African origin (according to the ABA all black people are Africans) who have for long nursed the desire to go back to the home continent, but lack the economic means of making the dream come true. She said that her brother believes that the proper thing for the British government to do is to assist such people by providing them with funds. She said African-British people have for many years contributed a lot towards the growth and sustenance of the British economy.

In his keynote address Chief Koleoso, the president of the association's steering committee, reiterated the association's commitment to help promote the economic advancement of all African-British citizens.

He announced a four point programme designed to aid this class of people.

This includes the establishment of a housing scheme which can enable subscribers to the scheme to own their dream houses worth up to £100,000. He also announced a legal education training scheme open to all African-British; this scheme has already taken off. A business loan scheme to aid businesses is on offer, as is an African British cultural and recreational centre in London. A building has already being acquired for this purpose in South East London.

Chief Koleoso said that African-British citizens should look at the examples set by their brethren in the US. Declaring that there is no such thing as Afro-Caribbean, he said African-Americans used to be referred to as Afro-Americans until they rejected such an unwelcome tag. He called on all to come together to rebuild the confidence of Africans in the UK.

Miss Grant (standing) during the launch with Chief Koleoso (sitting on the right) at the top table

The Gold Coast Connection (2)

In this final instalment, James Gibbs *highlights the second and third generations of Ghanaians who also sought further education at Queen's College, Taunton*

IN THE FIFTIES, Justice Akiwumi sent his son, Akilaja Olufemi, to Queen's Taunton, where he distinguished himself as a rugby player and established a new school high jump record. When the television cameras turned up to transmit a "This is your Life" programme featuring H.J. Channon, whose history of the school has been quoted from, both justice Akiwumi, then speaker of the House of Assembly, and his son were featured - indicating that the family's links with Queen's were already regarded as remarkable.

From the school 'A.O.' followed a well-trodden path for West Africans: he went to London where he read Law. Currently he occupies a position that is part of the world-order that came into existence after the Second World War as a representative of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

During the seventies, eighties and nineties, seven members of a third generation of Akiwumis, the grandchildren of Justice Akiwumi, have been at the school. Three of them are easily identified in the school lists since they are descended from sons and carry the Akiwumi name. Others - William and Roland Renner, William Kow Ward Brew and Yomi Djokoto, are less easy to tie in since they are descended from Justice Akiwumi's daughters.

From the school publications for the past two decades, it can be seen that this generation has contributed, as earlier generations did, to school rugby, cricket and athletics teams, and that like father, great-uncle or grandfather before them, they have used the school to open doors to higher education.

But these similarities do not disguise the differences. The economic and political situation which enabled and encouraged an earlier generation of West African entrepreneurs to send their sons to Taunton has been transformed. And the school, though the main building appears the same from the outside and the "lower" playing field is still recognisable, has changed dramatically in the 110 years since Mensah Sarbah arrived.

As is to be expected, the school now offers a much wider range of activities and West African pupils have taken advantage of the developments - or created them! Recent Akiwumis have not only appeared covered in the mud of the rugby pitch, sporting the flannels of the cricketer, and wearing the spikes of the athlete, but also, for example, behind fencing masks, on the Tae Kwan Do mat and wearing stage make-up. Career patterns have altered radically too. True, one member of the third generation has been called to the bar, but others have listened to other voices and moved in other "safe" directions such as accountancy, and "unsafe" directions such as film production, food science and the fashion-design business.

One way in which the school remains the same is in welcoming the contribution which can be made by boys - and now girls - from Ghana - or of West African families living "abroad". The record of achievement of Ghanaian Old Queenians means that much is expected of them: John Mensah Sarbah is a hard act to follow.

Women writers' workshop

The Commonwealth Institute are organising a Women Writers' Workshop in January. This Workshop is the eleventh in their annual series. It will feature Anna Rutherford from the University of Aarhus, Denmark, who will give the introductory remarks. Paula Burnett who edited *The Penguin Book of Caribbean Verse* will lead a workshop. Others who will be leading workshops include Shirley Chew on *In Custody* (Penguin) by Anita Desai; Shanta Acharya (Rupa), author of *Not This, Not That*; Merle Collins, author of Rotten Pomerack (Vigaro); Sunetra Gupta, author of *The Glass Blower's Breath*; and Lauretta Ngcobo, author of *And They Didn't Die* (Vigaro).

The women writers' workshop will take place on January 15 from 9.30am. The workshop costs £16 including VAT or £11 including VAT for concessions (senior citizens, students, unwaged, friends of the Commonwealth Institute). Cheques should be made payable to Commonwealth Institute and sent to Gloria Maddy, Programmes Section, Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London W8 6NQ. For further information and a registration form contact Paola Marchionni on 071 603 4535 ext 235.

Notice Board

TALK

● **Africa Centre** presents **Islam in Contemporary sub-Saharan Africa** by Louis Brenner, 38 Kings Street, London WC2, **January 20 1994** at 6.30pm. Admission £3, £2 concs. 071 836 1973.

SERVICE

● **International Watchnight Service**, Hinde Street Methodist Church, West London Mission, off Manchester Square, London W1, **December 31 from 10.30pm**.

MUSIC

● **Africa Centre** presents **Imbile (Nigeria)**, African music night, **January 7, 1994** 38 Kings Street, London WC2. 071 836 1973

DINNER/DANCE

● **Adun Society** presents a gala Dinner and Dance Night, Imperial Hotel, Russell Square, London WC1B 5BB, **December 30** from 8pm till 2am. Tickets £35 each. For tickets contact 081 694 1951, 071 793 9724, 081 694 8089.

● **Brong Ahafo Association (UK)**, Amigo Hall, St George's Cathedral, St George's Road, Elephant and Castle, London SE1, **December 27** from 6pm till 2am. Fee £3. For further details phone Ntakraboa on 071 277 0302.

● **University of Cape Coast Alumni Association (UK and Ireland)**, Holy Innocents' Church Hall, Tottenham Lane, London N8, (nearest tube Turnpike Lane), **January 1, 1994** from 8pm till 1am. 081 800 6416/ 071 237 2349.

● **Berekum Association (UK)**, annual get-together, Tooting Bec Hospital, Church Lane, London SW17, **December 31** from 6pm till 5am. 081 558 6727.

EXHIBITION

● **New Era presents "El Sentido de mi Vida"** by Ismael Vantour Causse, 194-198 Railton Rd, Herne Hill, London SE24, until **January 22**. 071 652 1418

● **Africa Centre** presents **Nigerian Photo Exhibition** by Nigerian artist **Ifeoma Onyefulu**, 38 Kings Street, London WC2. Official opening on **January 6** at 6.30 pm will be followed by a discussion about the work of the artist. The exhibition will run **until February 4, 1994.**

LITERATURE/POETRY

● **Africa Centre** presents **Heart-Beats**, an evening of recitation of Love Poems from Africa accompanied with sounds of some of the best traditional musicians and tam-tam artists, 38 Kings street, London WC2, **January 25 1994** at 6.30pm. Tickets £3, £2 concs. 071 836 1973.

● **Penn State University** is organising an international conference on Ngugi Wa Thiong'O at Penn State, Berks Campus, Reading Pennsylvania from **April 7-9, 1994**. There is an invitation to submit papers, proposals, abstracts, letters of inquiry by **December 31**. Contact address Charles Cantalupo, Conference Director, Department of English, Penn State University, Schuylkill Haven, Pennsylvania, 17972 USA (717) 385 6055.

● **Commonwealth Institute** presents, **Women's Writers Workshop,** on **January 15**, 1994 from 10am till 17.30. For details and a programme contact Ronald Warwick on 071 603 4535 ext 255.

The best of African culture

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4, saw the second event of Owari, a London based group whose aim is promote and celebrate African culture. The best of African Culture was a show case of the finest African fashions and an exotic dance programme. The show started exactly on time and for the next 75 minutes there was literally a non stop parade of show stopping fashion and dance. The applause was continuous as the clothes literally got better and better, and the empathy between models and the audience spilled back and forth culminating in a truly unforgettable night. This was truly a night to be proud of Africa - proud that Africans could put on a show of this quality and professionalism.

A fashion showcase

The show began with four men playing Owari - the board game, while comperes, Eric Bediako and Audrey La-Danso, introduced the show. The two comperes led the audience into a beautiful and surprisingly erotic dance (choreographed by Lati Saka), as the women of the village brought offerings to the audience, then without hiatus, Owari presented a celebration of African haute couture.

Some of the models were Betty Braiche-Hubbard, Audrey Djan, Laure and "Aga", but the most successful part of the show were the clothes. Designers Rose Sowole (Nigeria), Pauleen Sussungi (Cameroon), Selina Mensah (Ghana), Peter Rabvukwa (Zambia) set standards of imagination that will be hard to beat. Rose Sowole who concentrated on the casual section distinguished herself with informal but stylish clothes. Peter's evening wear for men and women reinforced his position as a premier East African designer. Pauleen Sussungi (whose clothes were sold out) created a brilliant ethnic collection that effectively bridged into Western haute couture. Selina Brown, the incredibly imaginative Ghanaian designer's exotic fabrics and designs, turned the models into a stunning collection of roses, lilies and orchids. This wonderful show ended appropriately with a dance of victory to the background of Osibisa's "Choboi".

For more information on Owari or on any of the designers contact Irene or Taj on 081 209 1351 or write to Owari c/o the National Liberal Club, Whitehall Place.

Mission accomplished

THE GHANA UNION London delegation which left London for Ghana on November 28 1993 to lobby for the adoption of dual citizenship for Ghanaians concluded its mission during the first week of December.

The leader of the delegation, Mr Alex Daniels, who is also chairman of the Ghana Union London, was met at Heathrow on his return by Mr Sammy Okine, executive member and the administrator/co-ordinator Ben Aryee. Mr Alex Daniels in a brief statement said that although the delegation officially concluded its mission on December 9, the remaining members of the delegation had stayed behind to deal with outstanding matters before returning to London.

He said that the mission was a great success and there was overwhelming support for immediate amendment of the aspects of the 1992 Constitution which deprived Ghanaians of their right to be Ghanaians if they acquire citizenship of a second country.

The dual citizenship issue became the talking point on radio, television and the press.

Mr Daniels remarked that it is heartening to note that the general mood of the people who met the delegation is for an immediate action to amend the clause on dual citizenship in the 1992 constitution.

Some of the issues that needed clarification were the question of refugees, the dilemma that will arise when a Ghanaian with dual citizenship commits a crime in Ghana and runs to seek protection from the diplomatic mission of his second country and loyalty. Mr Daniels said that the case of refugees is covered by international convention and is not relevant to dual citizenship. When a Ghanaian who is also a citizen of another country commits a crime in Ghana, international law states that such a person cannot get assistance or protection against the authorities of Ghana; and indeed there is no precedent of Ghanaians with another citizenship committing any crime against Ghana and seeking refuge in a diplomatic mission anyway.

On loyalty the delegation drummed home the fact that the loyalty of Ghanaians abroad has been tested and proved unalloyed by the fact that in spite of the difficulties and humiliation they suffer when they arrive with foreign passports at Ghanaian ports of entry, they continue to harness their resources abroad and make sure that they repatriate some of their gains home for the welfare of their people and development of Ghana. Their love and loyalty to Ghana is further confirmed by the fact that they "come" home even when they are dead.

He concluded with the approbation by the media and the Ghanaian public of the opportunities given their children born abroad or taken abroad when they are young and educated to their highest abilities for the benefit of Ghana.

The delegation was invited to the Farmers' Day Celebration at which a token donation was made to the farmers' cause on behalf of Ghana Union London.

Year of the Creator

In 1992 the Rastafari Movement took a giant step towards accomplishing a cherished vision of repatriation. Over 100 delegates from the international community converged in Ethiopia for a month of festivities and special events. The occasion was to honour the 100th anniversary of the birth of His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie 1 of Ethiopia, acknowledged head of the movement. ***Shango Baku*** *reports on the state of the movement*

Rastafari elders from Jamaica with members of the Centenary committee

AN EDITED VIDEO of this epic journey has been produced by the Centenary Committee for the Rastafari. Since the inception of the movement in the '30s Rastafarians' philosophy and lifestyle have played a major role in shaping Black consciousness worldwide.

The uncompromising stance on issues such as black identity and dignity, equal rights and justice, positive thought and natural living ('livity'), has earned Rastafarians a special place in the hearts of oppressed people everywhere.

On the broader agenda, Rastafari symbols, motifs and colours have been widely appropriated by international sport, fashion art and youth culture, as have been its salt-free and meat-free diets, ecological harmony and creative use of available resources for self-development. All of this has been subsumed by the world community and integrated in a new worldwide view based on peace and fraternity.

However, these contributions to Black consciousness and global culture have gone relatively unacknowledged. In the Caribbean Rastafarians are still denied basic human rights and discrimination in the employment, educational and housing sectors is still rampant. Adverse media reports have often been used to fuel social rejection of the movement. Rastafarians are often sensationally portrayed as anarchic, violent drug-pushers, part of the criminal fringe and a menace to society.

Some of the worst injustices against Rastafarians have been curbed in recent years. Conscious activism within the international Rastafarian community since the '70s has ensured a clearer articulation of the Rastafarian position on 'livity' and the vigorous defence of individual and communal rights.

"The Year of The Creator" heralds a new chapter in the history of the movement, one in which the victory of righteousness is made manifest through practical works in the eyes of a doubting world. As the rising tide of fascism again threatens to engulf the West, repatriation (in a vacuum) seems a tame response to the heartfelt wishes of Black people for a life of peace and contentment.

It becomes an empty and divisive strategy if not consciously aligned to the realities on the ground. "The Year of the Creator" is the official documentation of the historic visit. Beautifully captured on camera and skilfully edited, with informative narration, and actual Nyhabingy music track, the people, the places, the history, the Rastafari presence and the reality of Ethiopia are exclusively shared in this documentary which aims to entertain, inform and edify viewers of whatever persuasion. It also provides a unique insight into the Rastafari faith.

For further information contact the **Centenary Committe for Rastafari, 239 Uxbridge Road, Shepherds Bush, London W12 9DL. Telephone: 081 740 6879.**

IN MEMORY

Treasured memories of JAMES BAMBAY KAMARA aged 60 years, former Inspector General of Police of the Sierra Leone Police after serving his country and the Police Force for 40 years, and all those helpless Sierra Leoneans who were summarily executed on or about December 29, 1992.

You were suddenly taken away from us by an act of butchery and human degradation which outrages decent men everywhere. You will be mourned and remembered by all those who love justice, freedom and unity.

Time may fade away, but memories of those we love live on and never die.

May your innocent souls rest in Perfect Peace.
By all the children and relatives worldwide.

Stimuli and tensions

The Invisible Ghetto: Lesbian and Gay Writing From South Africa edited by *Matthew Krouse and Kim Berman (Johannesburg: COSAW, 1993)*

THIS ANTHOLOGY contains a double introduction, one section by each of its two editors. Matthew Krouse points to the significance of the book: the first of its kind to appear in South Africa, made possible by the (relatively) recent emergence of lesbian and gay organisations in that country and progressive groups committed to countering gender discrimination. Kim Berman, in her section, catalogues these organisations, noting how the task has been tougher for lesbians - "marginalised within the broader definition of marginalised sexuality" - and noting, especially, how harder still it has been for black lesbians, with all the stigma attached to forming anything other than a clandestine group. Krouse notes the importance of the Congress of South African Writers, the publishers of this book, an organisation which "forms part of the network of cultural and educational groups who regard the development of human self-realisation as a crucial means of overcoming the imbalances created by apartheid".

The contents pages list separately autobiographical pieces, interviews, poems, short stories. But in the book these are mingled together, and this in itself is a challenge to how we look at things (Did that really happen? *Could* it happen?). Unlike many anthologies, this one really does benefit from being read cover to cover. Its careful arrangement of materials that complement or collide with each other has a cumulative impact. Krouse again: "Our task has been to constitute a book containing a broad range of themes and genres, descriptive of contemporary South African lesbian and gay life, viewed from as many perspectives as possible."

Quite a lot of the writing is translated from Afrikaans - an indication of how much radical and innovative work has been done in that language, everything from the novel to rock lyrics. Some of the work - both in English and from Afrikaans - focuses narrowly (but not in a pejorative sense) on the psychology of love. The quality of the writing in most of these pieces is so good that one isn't going to lose sleep over the relative lack of concern here with the special oppressions of the South African setting. Johannes Meintjes's work dates back to the 1940s (the collection *Kamerade* - he died in 1980). The story reprinted here, "Summer Holiday", is completely un-mawkish, precise and bitterly moving. There is the erotic poetry - a challenge to some readers, a gift to others - of Marcellus J. Muthien and Tanya Chan Sam. Also the story "Bye Bye, Forget Me Not", both subtle and tough-minded, by Welma Odendaal, a writer whose work has at times been banned and (ultimate accolade) pulped. It is good to read this with the piece the editors have cunningly positioned immediately after, Dee Radcliffe's "Confessions of a Failed Lesbian Separatist".

But these contributions are exceptional, in that most writers here are focusing on the interlocking, intersecting (webbing, stabbing) of the stimuli and tensions that arise between sexuality, race, class and politics. As the editors say of the poems: "In many instances love is used as a point of entry into other subjects." The very first piece in the book (an autobiographical sketch) demands that we realise the whole contextualisation of oppression, violence and phobia, its opening line reading: "Being a girl in Soweto you play safe, find safe streets to use..."

'Whole context' is certainly here, if one looks at the biographical notes of some contributors. There is Simon Nkoli, one of the country's leading gay activists, detained five times on suspected "terrorism" and other political charges, before a further trial in 1984 for treason. While on bail at that point he founded GLOW (Gays and Lesbians of the Witwatersrand). His account of his upbringing, first job and early education, is an account of his life as a whole, in which so much is viciously difficult: the racism, the - unbelievably extreme - economic exploitation. It is crazy, bordering on the bleakest farce, that his gayness should, by the whole country of the blind, be made to be a problem too. His contribution is complemented by an autobiographical account by Tanya Chan Sam, also in the GLOW movement. Commenting on the failure of a workers' organisation to take a position on gay and lesbian rights, she argues: "It's outrageous, it's completely ridiculous from a socialist organisation, that they still have to debate...the issue of gay rights. It's almost like they have 'It' to give out, and it infuriates me."

Recognition of the whole context - politics, race, sexuality sustaining or deranging each other - emerges in a number of different ways. Mikke van Zyl's "Pathway to the Moon" is an audacious re-reading of the origins of a famous, touristic historical site:

Why is it that none of the history books mentions the entwined skeletons of two women, which were found at the bottom of the conical tower in the great enclosure?

One or two contributions register a large part of the appalling reality of apartheid, its lack of immediacy for the privileged.

Matthew Krouse's excellent story "The Barracks Are Crying" - one of a number of pieces on SADF conscripts - speaks with a voice that has come all the way through bewilderment, mourning and shellshock, and now lives in a raw but secure contempt for the military, and for all the makers of white South Africa.

Another author, Stephen Gray, is billed as "noted critic, literary historian, poet, editor, novelist and playwright" - and he does indeed work with equal verve in all of these fields; one of his books in particular, the novel *Time of our Darkness*, charts homosexual love as it lives against, and through, South Africa's political, racial, class-based and cultural formations, with very great power. He takes a sizeable section of the present anthology: poems, and the acutely touching but unsentimental autobiographical piece "The Building Site". His memoir of Richard Rive is great reading, especially when reminding us of Rive's wit (with his books banned, Rive commented: "I was now part of a small elite of South African writers not allowed to read their own works in case they became influenced by them"). But this is a long piece in the context of the anthology, and since the facts about Rive's sexuality remain uncertain (Gray speculates: homosexual but inactive?) maybe this isn't the best place for it. You could argue that silence, self-censorship, over-compensation, are suggested by an account of Rive's life and these are, unfortunately, important themes for this book. But such themes might have been provided more directly in a selection of other pieces (the book does contain Shaun de Waal's story "Stalwart", which handles the conditions of self-denial and displacement very effectively). In any case, the closing paragraph of Gray's memoir of Rive is arresting, opening wide and awesome dimensions.

Among the documentary accounts are interviews with migrant mineworkers. What is striking here is not so much confirmation of the conditions under which homosexual relations are formed at the mines, but the extent to which these are 'internalised' by the participants. This comes across especially in an extensive and frank interview conducted by Mpande wa Sibuyi with a Mozambican miner, "Philemon", which details the structure of relationships between mine hostel 'husbands' and 'wives', the constraints and benefits they experience. How complete is the account? - there is no admission of sexual violence. That is a central dimension in other autobiographical accounts in the book, by male prostitutes.

Not everything in this book is well written. Some pieces have sentences that slide off into a dull mumble, or there is a dumb choice of word that makes the sentence garble like a twisted cassette. But there is a saving point even in these pieces: they say what many people do - and this hasn't been said so openly before. In South Africa, a book such as this hasn't been constituted before: its appearance is a statement and an event in itself.

Chris Dunton

A year of mixed emotions

The sports scene in Africa in 1993 went through a period of ups and downs, writes Dapo Nadi

AFRICA RE-EMPHASISED its growing importance in the world of sports in the course of the year 1993.

In athletics, although the continent had a rather dismal outing at the Fourth World Indoor Championships, Africa made great advances in the game.

Moroccan Khalid Skah, the Olympics 10,000 metres champion won, the Mol World Challenge Cross Country race in what was one of the first athletics meetings of the year. Fita Bayesa of Ethiopia, who won the 5,000 metres bronze at the last Olympic Games in Barcelona, led an African clean sweep of the top six places at the Italica Cross Country Challenge held in Seville, Spain.

In Amorebieta, Spain, at the 21st IAAF/SNICKERS world cross country championship, Africa was again prominent at the 11,750 metres course for men.

Spurred on by a largely Spanish crowd estimated at 30,000 William Sigei of Kenya with a time of 32 minute 15 seconds won the championship, followed by five other Kenyans, three Ethiopians and two Moroccans in a race in which the first 11 positions were won by Africans. Africa had 16 out of the top 20 finishers in the 217 strong field

In March, the fourth IAAF World Indoor Athletics Championships were held in Toronto, Canada. The continent only managed a total of four medals with the only gold coming from the world's 800 metres queen Maria D, at the biennial three day athletics festival.

Barcelona Olympics 100 metres silver medallist, Frank Fredericks of Namibia, conceded the gold medal in the men's 60 metres event, to Canada's newest sprinting hero, Bruny Surin, in a very close encounter. The two left the block together and stayed neck and neck until the final 15 metres when Surin edged ahead. Surin's time of 6.50 to Fredericks 6.51 equals the championship records.

In similar fashion Nigeria's Sunday Bada settled for the silver medal after a hard battle round the final bend with the world 400 metres record holder 'Butch' Reynolds of the US.

At the fourth IAAF World Athletics Championships the top African long distance athletes shone. It is no mean feat that Kenya, joint fourth with England on the medal tables, was the highest placed African nation at the championship held in Stuttgart, Germany, undeterred by the absence of Yobes Ondieki. The men's 10,000 metres world record holder allegedly pulled out of the championship over an argument about the frequency of the championships.

The Kenyans led by Paul Ruto and Billy Konchellah who won gold and bronze respectively in the men's 800 metres again featured prominently in the long distance races.

Maria D was on song once again for Mozambique. The African track queen who did not experience the indignity of defeat this year promptly grabbed the gold medal in the women's 800 metres at the world championships.

Nouredinne Morcelli of Algeria, persuaded to defend his 1500 metres title after his earlier declaration not to take part in the world athletics festival over arguments about appearance fees, won the 1500 metres gold medal, with a time of 3:34.24.

Gebrasallasie of Ethiopia also won gold in the 10,000 metres event. The race erupted into controversy when Moses Tanui lost his shoes after appearing to have made contact with the gangling Ethiopian. The Kenyan had to make do with the silver medal.

Five Africans consisting of four Nigerians Godfrey Okugbe, Ime Akpan, Innocent Asonze and female athlete Vivian Chukwuemeka, one Egyptian, Mohammed Naguib tested positive for drugs. While Innocent Asonze and Egyptian Mohammed Naguib are serving out a four year ban the other three are awaiting hearings on their cases. John Ngugi of Kenya who allegedly refused to undergo an out of competition dope test, is also awaiting hearing on their cases.

In February Hunter Clay of Nigeria lost by a unanimous points decision, his WBC International Super Middleweight crown to the ageing Lou Gent of the UK.

Thirty-four year-old Azumah Nelson of Ghana gained a points decision over Gabriel Ruelas of Mexico early in the year. The closeness of the contest led to questions about the ability of the Ghanaian pugilist, who is a traditional chieftain, to carry on despite his age.

Azumah has held the title he took from Marto Azabache Martinez, for eight years.

Babatunde Jonathan of Nigeria won the African cruiserweight title in sensational fashion last April, when he stopped Napoleon Abbey of Ghana with what was virtually the first real punch of the contest, a vicious right hook, in the opening round.

African boxing lost one of its most colourful personalities. Chief Ralph Ogunbufunmi, a former President of the African Boxing Confederation (ABC), died in a motor accident, on February 5.

Chief Ogunbufunmi, who was president of the Professional Commission of the ABC as well as being Vice President of the World Boxing Council (WBC), dedicated his life and wealth to the cause of professional boxing in Nigeria.

It was Kenya again that won the fifth Women African Nations Volleyball championships held in Ilorin in October. Kenya is credited with having the best women volleyball team on the continent

The year witnessed further development towards the rehabilitation of South Africa into international sports.

It was announced in February that South Africa will host the cricket world cup scheduled to hold in 2001

Football in Africa and especially Zambia suffered significant setbacks during the year. Widely tipped to take one of the three places at the next World Cup finals on offer to Africa, the entire Zambian national team was wiped out in an air accident, off the coast of Gabon.

The accident threatened to upset the careful planning and aspirations of soccer enthusiasts throughout the continent.

But Zambia rallied, supported by the entire football world. The effort to rebuild the national team was led by Englishman Ian Campbell. And from almost nothing a world class Zambian national team, narrowly missed qualifying for US'94 and made it through to the finals of the African Cup of Nations billed for Tunisia next March.

Soccer highlights during the year revolved round the World Cup qualifying series and the African Cup of Nations qualifiers. Earlier in the year, African youth had given indications as to what to expect during the year, treating the world to the wealth and enormous resources and ability available on the continent soccerwise, January 30.

Ghana and Cameroon, two of the leading soccer sides on the continent, aptly met in the final match of the African Youth

Soccer Championships held in Mauritius. Ghana won this encounter with Cameroon 2-0.

The two sides proceeded to Australia where they represented the continent in the World Youth Soccer tournament, for the Coca Cola Cup, which kicked off in that country on March 9. Ghana lost to Brazil in the final of the under 20 soccer tournament.

Africa's successful year in youth soccer reached its highest point in Japan which hosted the FIFA/JVC under 17 World Cup. Ghana, Nigeria and Tunisia represented Africa. Ghana and Nigeria met in the final which Nigeria won 2-1. Ghana, having seen off the challenges of Japan, the host nation, by a 1-0 victory, beat Mexico 4-1, Italy 4-1, Australia 1-0 and Chile 3-0. Nigeria on the other hand ascended to the final by defeating Canada 8-0, Argentina 4-0, Australia 2-0, Japan 2-1 and Poland 2-1.

The three nations that will carry the flag for Africa at the World Cup in the US emerged at the completion of the qualifying series. The teams are Nigeria, Cameroon and Morocco.

Zimbabwe was the surprise team of the year. The team, led by Peter Ndlovu with Bruce Grobelaar in goal, treated fans to exciting display of delicately scintillating soccer. They were always prone to score goals with Agent Sawu leading their attack.

In the continental clubside competitions, the West African Football Union's club soccer championships was won by the Bendel Insurance of Benin who beat Mogas'90 at the finals.

In the Mandela Cup, Al Ahly of Egypt defeated the previous champion Africa Sport of Cote d'Ivoire 1-0 in the second leg of the final to claim the title which they have now won for the fourth time.

The Sekou Toure Cup was won by Zamalek FC, another Egyptian side defeating yet another West African side, Asante Kotoko of Ghana, 7-6, in the final match of the competition.

The first leg played in Kumasi had ended in a draw. The match was eventually decided by penalty shoot-outs.

In the semi-finals of the Sekou Toure Cup, Asante Kotoko met Africa Sport of Cote d'Ivoire. Kotoko won the duels between the two West African club soccer titans to advance to the finals.

This however led to attacks on Ghanaians resident in Cote d'Ivoire. Many Ivoirians obviously provoked into anger by the defeat of their teams went on a rampage that resulted in fatalities.

Some reports have it that up to 50 lives were lost as a result of these acts of hooliganism.

- The draw for the 1994 World Soccer finals scheduled for the US next summer was completed on December 19 in the US city of Las Vegaas.

Cameroon will meet Brazil, Russia and Sweden in the preliminary rounds; this group may yet prove to be one of the toughest groups of the championships. With the Brazilians 9-2 odds on to win the championship, an ill-prepared Cameroonian side will definitely face an uphill struggle to go beyond the first rounds.

Nigeria is in Group B with Argentina, Bulgaria and Greece. A closer look reveals another difficult group which no one can take for granted. In qualifying for the championships Bulgaria scored the highest number of goals, and like Nigeria several members of the team are top professionals plying their trade in Western Europe.

Morocco, Holland, Belgium and Saudi Arabia are grouped together in Group F.

Nigeria will meet Bulgaria on June 21 in the "cowboy" city of Dallas.

- GROUP A
June 18
US(50-1 odds on) v Switzerland(33-1)
Pontiac Silverdrome, Detroit; cap. 76,000
climate 83.1F.
Colombia(10-1) v Rumania(50-1)
Rose Bowl, Los Angeles; 102,083
climate 83.5F
June 22
US v Colombia
Los Angeles
Rumania v Switzerland
Detroit
June 26
US v Rumania
Los Angeles
Switzerland v Colombia
Stanford Stadium, Palo Alto San Fransisco
cap: 86,019. climate: 71F.

- GROUP B
June 19
Cameroon(100-1) v Sweden(40-1)
Rose Bowl, Los Angeles.
June 20
Brazil(4-1) v Russia(25-1)
Stanford Stadium, San Fransisco.
June 24
Brazil v Cameroon
Stanford Stadium, S.Fransisco
Sweden v Russia
Pontiac Silverdrome, Detroit.
June 28
Russia v Cameroon
Stanford Stadium, S.Fransisco
Brazil v Sweden
Detroit.

- GROUP C
June 17
Germany(4-1) v Bolivia(33-1)
Soldier Field, Chicago, cap:66,814
climate: 88.3F.
Spain(16-1) v South Korea(250-1)
Cotton Bowl, Dallas; 72,000
climate:97.5F.
June 21
Germany v Spain
Chicago
June 23
South Korea v Bolivia
Foxboro Stadium, Boston; 61,000
climate: 81.8
June 27
Bolivia v Spain
Chicago

- GROUP D
June 21
Argentina(8-1) v Greece(100-1)
Boston.
Nigeria(80-1) v Bulgaria(50-1)
Dallas
June 25
Argentina v Nigeria
Boston.
June 26
Bulgaria v Greece
Chicago.
June 30
Greece v Nigeria
Boston

- GROUP E
June 18
Italy(9-2) v Ireland(40-1)
Giants Stadium, New York; 76,891
climate: 81.6F
June 19
Norway(40-1) v Mexico(40-1)
RFK Stadium, Washington; 56,500
climate: 87.9F.
June 23
Italy v Norway
New York
June 24
Mexico V Ireland
Citrus Bowl, Orlando; 70,188
climate: 91.7F.
June 28
Ireland v Norway
New York
Italy v Mexico
Washington.

- GROUP F
June 19
Belgium (20-1) v Morocco(150-1)
Orlando
June 20
Holland(7-1) v S.Arabia(250-1)
Washington.
June 25
S. Arabia v Morocco
New York
Belgium v Holland
Orlando.
June 29
Morocco v Holland
Orlando
Belgium v S.Arabia
Washington

- Second Round:
July 2-5; to be played at Chicago, Washington, Dallas, LA, Sa Fransisco, Boston and NY.
Quarter Finals:
July 9-10; at Boston, Dallas, NY and San Fransisco.
Semi Finals
July 13; at New York and Los Angeles.
Final:
July 17; at Los Angeles, kick off 8:30 BST.

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Please find below our schedule for the

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR

ISSUE DATED
20 - 26 DECEMBER 1993

This will be produced and distributed as usual on

Friday 17 December 1993.

ISSUE DATED
27 DECEMBER 1993 - 2 JANUARY 1994
&
3 - 9 JANUARY 1994

This will be a DOUBLE issue and the last for the year.

It will be produced and distributed on

Wednesday 22 December 1993.

ISSUE DATED
10 - 16 JANUARY 1994

This is expected to be the first issue of 1994 and it will be produced and distributed as usual on

Friday 7 January 1994.

Finally, also take note that the office will be closed on the following days:-

23 December 1993
24 December 1993
27 December 1993
28 December 1993
3 January 1994

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Danny K. Idollor
Sales & Distribution Manager

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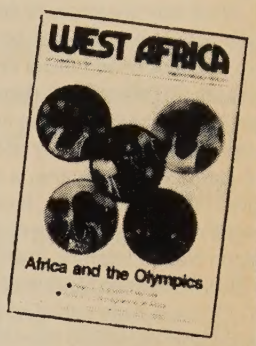

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FROM OUR FILES

A selection from past issues of the magazine 75, 50 and 25 years ago

Bush-whacking experiences

WEST AFRICA
December 21, 1918

AS WAR CORRESPONDENTS do not accompany the Allied troops operating in remote parts of the globe, and casualties are not published from day to day in our newspapers, it is not surprising that "the man in the street" knows very little of the fierce fighting that took place in the Cameroons and, until recently, in German East africa.

What little we know of these battles, particularly the latter, has been told in the form of condensed official dispatches. Towards the end of that campaign it may be mentioned that the Armies in the field consisted almost entirely of Natives, West and North-West Africans, a battalion of the Indian 5th Light Infantry, a company of the West Indian Regiment, and that splendid French Native Infantry, the Senegalese, led by English Scotch, and Irish Officers and N.C.O.'s specially selected for service in the tropics and seconded from their Home regiments.

Some of the fiercest fighting and heaviest casualties were sustained on both sides at Edea, Stoebels, and Harmann's farms, Mora, Garua, Wumbiagas, N'gung, and Banyo. At Banyo General Cunliffe, in dispatches, said: "This action may, I think, be justly described as one of the most arduous ever fought by Native troops".

It is not possible to describe the hard fighting which occurred at these places. It is worth of mention, however, that the well-nigh impregnable fortress of M-, which is situated on the summit of a steep and rocky kopje, was stubbornly held by the Germans against numerous assaults and a close blockade from October 14, 1914, until February 18, 1916, when the garrison surrendered to General Cunliffe. During a desperate attack on this fort, directed by the general in person, a handful of the Nigerian Regiment gained s footing on the summit and held on the position gained for 48 hours without food or water. After every effort to supply the gallant fellows had failed, General Cunliffe was compelled to order their withdrawal. A good deal of the enemy country through which the Northern columns under General Cunliffe marched and fought was sufficiently open to allow both mounted troops and artillery to operate successfully. But such was not the case with the French and British columns commanded by General A- and Colonel G- respectively. These troops had many long and strenuous months of fighting in dense forest and swamps, where horses could not live nor artillery be used effectively. Machine-guns proved the most useful and deadly weapons with the latter columns.

Santa Claus and Sierra Leone

WEST AFRICA
December 18, 1943

SIERRA LEONEANS WILL be wondering whether Santa Claus will visit them this year and slip into the communal stocking not indeed jewels rich and rare but the news that somebody has bought the jewel rich and rare found some months ago in the grounds of the Selection Trust. It is not as some reports at first had it, the world's largest diamond, but it is a stone of splendid quality, 30 carats unpolished, which weight makes it the world's eighth largest diamond. What the people of the Colony hope is that somebody will say, "I" (or "we" as the case may be) "want the eighth and won't wait," which is nearly what Londoners cried years ago when they demanded the building of the eight Dreadnoughts.

The people hope this because the State (which is they), has an interest in the company's profits, and if the relatively few people in the world able to pay cash down for the great diamond at the highest figure to which it can be "talked up" would come forward and mutually compete, the old Colony might get a bunch of university scholarships, or a milk production scheme enabling children to buy milk at a penny a glass, or something else also for the public benefit.

"Relatively few people"! Is not the number actually few indeed, not just relatively few? There may be - let us hope there are - still some in the US or the Argentine who can write a cheque for a globular sum for such a wonder-stone, and are not unprepared to do so, if at long last they find they cannot get the sum made less globular. This suggests that the Selection diamond may not be disposed of for a long time.

Dealing with such an article can hardly be thought of as a business matter in the ordinary sense. It may take on more the appearance and significance of higher diplomacy and call for the exercise of qualities suited to such an occasion.

A theme for a mystery novel! Aware that the juju emperor at Tokio greatly covets gems of this magnificence, a resourceful agent of the British Secret Service finds means of entering the Japanese capital, secures a firm offer of a million (not yen, which would not do at all, but pounds), delivers the goods and decreases enemy buying power by the sum of one million pounds - a useful item - then, more thrilling still, "brings home the bacon," outwitting Tojo's most painstaking panel of murderers! Question in casuistry for the Brains Trust: which could be the course more desirable from the Allied standpoint, to sell to an enemy and reduce his buying power abroad, or to sell within Allied circles?

How many refugees?

WEST AFRICA
December 21, 1968

HOW IS RESETTLEMENT going in Ibo areas further from the fighting? For the casual observer it is very difficult to say. Certainly anybody who remembers the Enugu-Onitsha road, as I do, in earlier days must now make a desolate contrast between the constant procession on both sides of the road of women and children going to or coming from market, and the thin trickle now. But the markets are opening, at Ngwo, Nine-Mile Corner, Udi, and at many other places.

The nearer you get to the front the more obviously are the stalls designed to serve the soldiers stationed strongly all along the road. Of them the women and children and the occasional man appear to show no fear, and the children wave at the passing vehicles. But the great mystery is how many people remain on their farms away from the roads, where they always had temporary shelters which they have turned into more permanent homes. In Enugu, Anthony Asika, Administrator of the East Central State, who makes his headquarters in the old government lodge (one of the few public buildings in the city to be spared damage), told me that the population to the east was now "thick", and that every day he has fresh evidence that the numbers inside Biafra tend to be exaggerated and those in his areas to be underestimated - although there is constant movement.

Since it is a war in which towns are the objectives, he wondered if any except town dwellers had fled before the Federal troops. If so, and taking into account the existing inhabitants and some Northern refugees, there might be no more than three million inside Biafra, a frightening enough thought, but one which calls in doubt the fantastic figures of daily deaths now advanced. Asika was very pleased that at last a small group of intellectuals and some Nsukka students had come out of Col Ojukwu's redoubt to join him - so far all observers had noted that peoples to be found in Iboland tended to be uneducated. He needs educated people desperately to build up his administration, whose most formidable tasks lie ahead.

Selection by Denrele Ogunwa

WEST AFRICA

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